

L O U I S A ;
OR, THE
COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

————— “ Ye good distrest !
“ Ye noble few ! who here unbending stand
“ Beneath life's pressure ; yet bear up awhile ;
“ And what your bounded view, which only saw
“ A little part, deem'd evil, is no more !
“ The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
“ And one unbounded spring encircle all.”

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, at Johnson's-
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M,DCC,LXXXVII.

J O U R N A L

OF THE

COTTAGE MOOR



IN TWO VOLUMES

"Ye good old man!"
"Ye noble few! who have undaunted stood
"In death's life's path; yet rose up smiling;
"And what your boundless love, which only love
"A little part, death's evil is no more!
"The future of whose time will surely pass
"And our unbounded love will be the all."

VOL. II

L O N D O N

Printed by G. KENTLEY, at London,
West, No. 2, Fleet Street.

MDCCCXXXII.

L O U I S A,

OR THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

SURPRISE for some time took from me the power of utterance: tears at length coming to my assistance, I endeavoured by entreaties and expostulations to persuade him to take me back; but in vain; for he was continually calling to the

VOL. II.

B

post-

post-boy to quicken his pace. Finding gentle methods fail, I reproached him in the bitterest terms; nor did I spare Mrs. Masters, whom I looked upon as his confederate. "Nay, stop there," said he, smiling: "I must exculpate her from any share in the business: the cloak and calash I contrived to steal, and sincerely believe she will be as little pleased with the affair as yourself: but time, my dear girl, will, I hope, procure my pardon; and a whole life, spent in assiduity and tenderness, efface my fault; and obtain, even from that obdurate heart, a gentle return of affection."



affection." To this I returned no answer, well knowing words were useless; and the road, as well as I could discern, being very lonely, made me conjecture screams would be the same.

We travelled, as I suppose, two hours and a half, from our first departure from the inn; when the detested man, perceiving I was faint, apologized for taking me so far without stopping; adding, "half an hour more will end our journey, and bring us to a house, of which you shall be the absolute mistress."

At this declaration all hope for-
 took me ; as I had imagined, that
 now morn began to break, we
 might fortunately meet some pas-
 sengers, to whom I might make
 my situation known. Deprived of
 what I thought my only resource,
 my fears overpowered me, and I
 sunk senseless to the bottom of the
 chaise. How long I continued in
 this state, I cannot tell. Danvers,
 however, from my situation, thought
 it necessary to let down the win-
 dow, and support me in his arms.
 By the help of the air I soon reco-
 vered. As to Danvers, he was so
 lost in his attention to my recovery,
 that

that it prevented his noticing two horsemen who passed the chaise. As I knew this would be my last opportunity, I exerted my utmost strength, and screamed with the greatest violence. Danvers, to whom this was unexpected, (as I fancy he thought me hardly capable of so much exertion) hastily drew up the window, cursing his own tenderness and my counterfeit swooning (as he was pleased to term it.) Notwithstanding his efforts to hinder it, I redoubled my cries; and a moment after, heard a voice, desiring the driver to stop, and inform him of the occasion of those

cries

B 3

screams

screams. Danvers, letting down the window, with dreadful imprecations ordered the lad to proceed ; but the person who first called was not to be moved from his purpose, as I continued begging for help and protection ; and the Gentleman enforced his commands to the post-boy with a cocked pistol in his hand. Danvers now lost all patience, and fired at the Gentleman, but fortunately missed him. It pleased heaven, as he drew out one pistol, I saw the end of another ; and with an effort of courage, more than I thought I possessed, hastily seized, and threw it out of the front window,

window, almost the same moment
 Danvers fired ; which increased his
 rage to such a degree, that I be-
 lieve, at the instant, he would have
 sacrificed me as well as my Deli-
 verer, who still held his pistol in
 his hand, without attempting to
 fire. This forbearance was, I sup-
 pose, occasioned by his humanity
 to me, who, shut up in the chaise,
 stood an equal chance for death
 with Danvers. He, now baffled in
 his project, called hastily to his
 servant to bring his fire-arms :
 this was also prevented, by the
 lacquey's horse taking fright at the
 firing, and overturning his rider

in the dirt. The unworthy Danvers being acquainted with this fresh disaster, and finding nothing further was to be obtained by violence, insisted to the stranger that I was his sister, and had eloped with his valet de chambre; that, pursuing us to Dover, he luckily overtook us as we were about to embark for Calais. I did not give him time to proceed; but, with the little strength this horrid scene had left me, leaped from the carriage, and, falling on my knees, entreated the Stranger's protection as far as Dover, where a Lady was, who had the care of me; that I

was

was just come from France, and was going to my friends in the North of England: in short, I told him, as well as I could, how I had been betrayed. The Stranger did not give me time to finish; but, leaping from his horse, raised me; then, turning to Danvers, told him he should conduct me back to Dover; that, if what he had advanced was true, in relation to my being his sister, he was welcome to return with us on his horse, as he himself should accompany me in the chaise. Danvers, who only regarded this offer as an insult, replied, "You may chance to

buy this victory dear ; let me know your name and place of residence, that I may repay the favours conferred on me.” — “ As to residence,” replied the stranger, “ I have not any ; neither can my name be of any service, as I do not mean to give you an opportunity of endeavouring to take my life, merely for preventing your being guilty of an act of violence and injustice. I am ever thankful to Providence, in making me the means to succour innocence : however, I do not pride myself in your defeat ; therefore, were I even well assured the event of a meeting you seem to wish

wish would be in my favour, of this be certain, (whatever signification the man of modern honour may give it) I never will put it in my power to send so unprepared a soul into the presence of its Maker." Saying this, he assisted me in getting into the chaise; then followed, himself; peremptorily ordering the driver to take me from whence I came, and his own servant to lead his horse, and follow the chaise. We then departed, leaving Danvers stamping on the ground with rage.

I returned the stranger thanks, as well as the commotion of my spi-

rits would permit : he, lost in
 thought, his eyes fixed on my face,
 with features that bore strong marks
 of grief, made no reply. Fearing he
 had received some hurt in the late
 rencontre, I entreated to know if
 he was well : disturbed from this
 reverie, he answered, " Perfectly
 so : my absence was occasioned by
 your extreme likeness to an angel,
 who for a short time blessed the
 earth ; heaven, who saw her pos-
 sessed of a larger share of virtues
 than belong to the human race,
 snatch'd her to her native skies."
 As he spoke, sensibility and man-
 hood

hood strove for mastership ; tenderness prevailed ; a tear escaped.

He then asked me my name and family, and to what part of England I was going : I told him, as briefly as I could, that I was an orphan, had spent the best part of my life in France, and now, for the first time in my remembrance, was going to see my guardian. I was interrupted by the post-boy, who stopped to inform us he found it impossible to make the horses proceed much further, as they were much fatigued ; and intreated us to change at an inn about a quarter of a mile.

a mile distant. The stranger consented, and we reached the place. On my getting out of the chaise, I found myself unable to walk, and relapsed into a second fainting : my generous protector immediately ordered me to lose some blood, and to be put to bed ; that himself would go to Dover, and inform the lady I left there, of what had happened ; that he would then return, and bid me farewell.

But, alas ! this was our final parting ; never since have I seen him. Great as were my obligations to him, a something beyond even
that

that endeared him. Perhaps my own heart, rent with painful feelings, sympathised with one whose sensibility seemed yet greater than my own. He appeared about the age of forty; or melancholy had marked him with more years than he had numbered.

A few hours brought Mrs. Masters to me, breathing bitter wishes against her former favourite; though I sincerely believe she found his inconstancy to herself more heinous than any other fault. "To make me," said she, "a convenience, a blind! sure never was
any

any thing so provoking : had I been old or ugly, I could have pardoned it ; and, fool like, I have told him your guardian's name ; so I suppose we shall be plagued with him there."

I knew it was in vain to reproach her with her imprudence, and only asked her where was the generous man to whom I was so much obliged. "Where is he !" said she : " why, gone about his business, to be sure. I think we have had enough of male companions : I will take care no more shall be with us : he would fain have bid you
farewell ;

farewell ; but I thanked him for his trouble, and made an excuse for seeing him any more."

" Merciful God ! is this the way you return thanks for such obligations, in this country ? Would to heaven I had remained in that peaceful spot where I passed my infant years ! Short as my abode with the world has been, I have been obliged to treat the man I detested, with respect, and him to whom I owe more than life, with ingratitude."

" Had you informed me, Miss," returned she, " you had any reason

ot

to dislike Mr. Danvers, all this might have been prevented."

" True, Madam ; but your want of confidence in me must excuse mine ; as you trusted Mr. Danvers with what you did not design to inform me, the name and family of my guardian." Whether she saw her imprudence in its proper colours, I do not know ; but she made no answer.

The next morning we set off, but made no stay when we reached London ; which made me conjecture, that her original design of staying

staying a night there was in compliment to her fallen favourite.

As we advanced on our road to the north, she grew more communicative, and said, had she not foolishly told Danvers my guardian's title, (who, she now informed me, was the Earl of Danford) she would not have mentioned the runaway scheme; but as, in all probability, Danvers would apply to him, 'twere better the secret came from us. As she seemed better humoured than usual, I was careful not to appear as if I thought this caution was for her own sake; but

but entreated her, now I was in my own country, to inform me if my parents had no relations to whom I might pay my duty. “ Your mother,” said she, “ died soon after you was born : for relations, look on Lord Danford as the nearest you possess ; but be careful not to let him think you know it, as it would be no service to you, and ruin me for betraying the trust reposed in me.”

I thanked her, and promised the most profound secrecy. Though my eyes were ready to overflow, I constrained my tears till I had a moment.

ment alone; then, throwing myself on my knees, "Almighty Father!" said I, "protect an innocent child, whom a parent blushes to own; for surely that is the secret so carefully concealed."

Alas! I knew I was a child of sorrow; but am I also one of shame? My unhappy Mother, too, paid dear for the fatal transgression: had she been spared, we would have wandered from a censorious world, where the duty of the child that marked her fall should have brought peace and comfort to her declining years.

The

The servant of the inn informed me the chaise waited ; and I immediately joined Mrs. Masters, who observed I had been weeping, and desired me to leave off those vapourish humours ; for, continued she, “ Lord Danford is such an enemy to melancholy, that if he only finds himself inclined to think, he immediately dissipates it by company or wine.” “ Alas,” returned I, “ the time will come when even those will be of no avail.” “ Oh, Child !” (exclaimed she, interrupting me) “ a truce with your religion, I conjure you ; we are all as good as we can.”

We

We travelled four days post, at the end of which time we reached Danford castle. In driving up the avenue, it is impossible to paint the various agitations I felt: respect, affection, duty, fear, alternately possessed me; for I had strongly persuaded myself, from Mrs. Masters's method of speaking, Lord Danford must be my father. The sight of a long-absent daughter, thought I, will awake nature, so long dormant in his bosom; and I shall forget their painful secrecy in the arms of a parent.

Vain,

Vain, flattering hope ; how many painful hours dost thou smooth over with pleasing expectation !

We reached the gate—a large bell gave notice of our approach—the door opened—I entreated the favour of Mrs. Masters's salts, by the help of which I followed her to the house ; on entering which, I found she must be a person of some account, by the deference paid her by several domestics who attended. “ Where is my Lord ? ” said she : “ does he know I am arrived ? ” “ No, Madam,” replied the servant ; “ but I will inform him of it

it immediately." "No," said she, "I will surprise him myself." So saying, she made a slight apology for leaving me, and ordered the man to show me to a parlour.

I remained an hour alone before Mrs. Masters returned; who then desiring me to follow her, we passed through several magnificent apartments before we reached that in which was seated Lord Danford. "Miss Villars, my Lord," said Mrs. Masters. His eyes momentarily met mine; but starting, and changing of a ghastly paleness, he hastily removed them, as from an object whose sight was obnoxious.

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"Give

“ Give me leave, my Lord,” said I, bending my knee, “ to return my thanks for your goodness, so many years, to a friendless girl, who, though her words may ill express her gratitude, yet by her actions, I hope, will give you no reason to repent your generosity.”

“ Rise, Child,” said he; the deadly pale giving way to burning crimson; “ you owe me no thanks, nor can I at present receive you as I ought.”

The Earl was a handsome man, apparently between fifty and sixty; of

of a commanding air, and an eye so penetrating, that when I found it fixed on me, I shrunk, as conscious of some defect. Though my confusion was great, the Earl's was equal; and three days passed before our looks could meet without a visible confusion on his side.

How amiable, thought I, is the Earl's disorder, on being reminded by the innocent proof of a long-expiated fault! yet how painful to a feeling heart, to think a parent views us with repentant eyes!

A few days wore off Lord Danford's gravity, and conquered my

timidity. I studied his temper with the greatest assiduity, calling forth every little talent I possessed, to amuse him. I sung to him, read to him; and, as he usually lay on the sofa an hour after dinner, he begged me to appropriate that time to the harpsichord; and I was soon convinced he regarded me not only with an eye of friendship, but affection. Happy as I thought myself to gain ground in Lord Danford's esteem, yet I felt sensibly hurt at some little familiarities that passed between him and Mrs. Masters, as it gave me room to think

think his conduct not so irreproachable as I at first believed.

One evening, as we were sitting after supper, "Well, Louisa," said he; "has that gentle heart of thine forgiven Danvers? Nay, do not blush; for Masters has told me all. Could he have applied to me honourably before I saw you, I should readily have closed with his offer; but at present, I believe, you must be arbitress of your own fate." As he spoke, he laid his hand on mine: I returned my thanks by pressing it to my lips. "You little enchantress!" continued he, returning my compliment, "I was determined to

dislike you ; how have you forced me to the opposite extreme !”

I expressed a wish to inform Madame Du Saint, and the Countess of Melville, I was happy. The Earl of Danford informed me Lord Melville was at Bath ; that himself should go there in a few weeks ; I should accompany him, and agreeably surprise my friends. As I had determined his word should be law, I acquiesced ; but wrote, by his permission, to the abbess ; yet I have never received an answer. The servant, one day, delivered him some letters that came by the post :

on

on reading the superscription of one he turned pale, his hand trembled, and it was some time before he could open it. Whether he was sensible of this alteration in himself, I do not know ; but he desired me to retire, and return in half an hour.

“ I have had a letter particularly displeasing to me, Louisa,” said he when I came back, “ as it puts me to the disagreeable necessity of parting with you for some short time: but you shall not go far distant, nor yet must your absence be long : I shall feel it too severely. Masters

shall go first, and prepare for your reception : I will conduct you to your retreat myself ; it is not more than six miles ; and, miser like, I shall daily steal time to visit my treasure."

I asked him when it was his pleasure I should depart. " Oh, there is no hurry," returned he ; " we are safe for this week, I believe. I have some wild young fellows coming to pay me a visit ; am I not merciful to hide so dangerous creature as you are ?"

Had the compliments I received from Lord Danford proceeded from
any

any other person, I should have heard them with disgust; but, persuaded they came from a parent, whose growing partiality would one day own me without blushing, self-love prevailed; and the sudden transition my appearance had made in the Earl, from aversion to affection, almost made me think I deserved them.

Mrs. Masters received the news of her journey with apparent disgust: though she did not venture to dissent from the Earl; yet her looks plainly indicated that her words, had she given them vent, would

not have been of the most pleasing sort.

Our adieus were short : my Lord was to conduct me to her in three days : never did I see him so cheerful as at her departure ; and the day passed with every appearance of pleasure on his side, and every desire of pleasing on mine.

The following day passed equally gladsome. Twenty times did I watch the motion of his lips, expecting him to throw off the painful mask, and own himself my father. Alas ! how bitter the disappointment !

ment! When he, as usual, after dinner, reclined on the sofa, I took my place at the harpsichord. "Do not play to-day, Louisa," said he; "your voice is more melodious than the instrument: so sit by me and amuse me with that; and, in return, I will tell you a secret. But first, can you forgive the neglect you have been treated with so many years?—a neglect which nothing, not even my whole fortune, can expiate." I did not give him leave to continue. "Do not, my Lord," said I, "rend my heart by asking me to forgive; rather let me spend my life in erasing any ill impression you

might formerly conceive of me :
 blessed with your approbation, I
 remember nothing but your good-
 ness and my own unworthiness."

" Sweet girl ! then let me seal
 my pardon by pressing to my heart
 the only delight it has felt so many
 years : yes, Louisa, from your
 birth until these few weeks, never
 have I known pleasure ; it again
 dawns on my soul, and in thy arms
 shall I find it realized." So saying,
 he embraced me with an ardour so
 far from pleasing, that my heart,
 which the moment before had al-
 most sprung to meet him, shrunk

to

to her native seat, overcome with fear and confusion.

“ What is the matter, my sweet girl ?” said he, seeing I trembled ; “ do you repent your gentle forgiveness ?”—“ No, my Lord ; but tell me, I beseech you, *whom* I should forgive ? In this posture,” said I, kneeling before him, “ let me intreat you to disclose the promised secret, and dispel the mist that overwhelms me.”

“ Whom,” said he again, pressing me to his arms, “ but your
lover,

lover, whose heart, life, and fortune, are yours."

" Good heavens ! lover !" repeated I, faltering, and rising from my humble posture : " What do you mean, my Lord ?"

" Mean !" returned he ; " I mean, you have too long been dependant ; henceforward, mistress of my fortune, I ask but to live in your smiles, and repose on that soft bosom." As he spoke, he again attempted to take me in his arms ; but, avoiding his embrace, " Why, my Lord," said I, " do you force
me

me to forget the obligations you have conferred on me, and oblige me to tell you I despise your fortune equally with the infamous means by which you would have me obtain it?"

My agitation was so great, that I know not what answer he made; for he again caught me in his arms, and, notwithstanding my cries, attempted liberties I shall ever blush to think of.

"Forbear, my Lord," said I, unless you mean to add my death to your other crimes, (catching the
scissars

scissars from the tambour frame that stood by the sofa); for I will sooner deprive myself of life than be the wretch you would have me."

Whether he thought my words greater than my courage, I know not; but he would have proceeded in his infamous intent. In that moment of horror, raising my hand, I attempted a blow at my breast; but hastily throwing his arm round my neck, he received the stroke. As he bled extremely, it obliged him instantly to loose me; though swearing I should not escape him.

Nor

Nor will you," said I, "escape the vengeance of that power who this night directed my hand. Think, my Lord; awake from this delirium. Ought not the relationship I hold to you deter you, if neither honour nor virtue can?"

"Relationship!" repeated he; his looks becoming paler than even the wound had occasioned; "What wretch told you so?—But begone, girl, and dread my revenge." As he spoke, he threw me the key of the door; which, till that time, I knew not was locked.

I in-

I instantly quitted the chamber, and the moment after heard him violently ring the bell for assistance, as I suppose, to dress the wound.

Great as were my terrors at this moment, a fear of still greater insult determined me immediately to quit the house as privately as possible, before he had time for recollection, as he then might use means to prevent it.

I descended by a pair of back stairs to the garden; which, crossing, I reached a little door that opened to the road; then, commending

mending myself to that Power that had hitherto protected me, I began my weary walk.

The night was clear and frosty; the moon shone bright: all was perfectly serene, except, between whiles, the screams of owls, which broke on the stillness of the night, and gave fresh speed to my trembling steps.

I measured some miles before my fears gave me time to recollect; I knew not where I was wandering; and the clothes I had on were my all. (I had that day been out
with

with Lord Danford, which occasioned my having on my riding-dress.) Of money I was not destitute, as in my pocket-book was Madame Du Saint's note of fifty pounds, besides about ten pounds that was left of a sum Lord Danford presented me with to dress myself in the English fashion.

For some hours I carefully avoided every house, so great were my fears of being pursued and forced back. But at length, overcome with fatigue, I resolved to enter the first cottage I met with, and inquire my way to some town,
from

whence I might get a conveyance to London, and meet with Lady Melville.

But, alas! I was already on the moor. In vain did I strain my sight to discern a light burning in some cot, to direct my weary steps. Several times was I on the point of sinking on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and benumbed with cold; and, when I reached this little mansion, had not your humanity received me, a short time must have reduced me to a lifeless frozen corpse.

Louisa cried; and received the thanks of Mrs. Rivers. “ But you cannot

cannot still think this wicked man to be your father?" said she. "Some fatal truth lurks under this veil of secrecy: but degrade not nature so far, as to think it produces so shocking a monster. It is more probable you are really an orphan, that should possess more than he likes to part with; for what Masters said might only be to prevent questions."

"I should be intirely of your opinion," returned Louisa; "but the visible horror he underwent, at the bare mention of relationship, half confirmed the dreadful surmise."

"Dreadful

“ Dreadful indeed,” replied the lady : “ but banish the idea : you shall write to Lady Melville, and inform her of your misfortunes ; she may assist you in making Lord Danford solve this mystery. In the mean time, secure in my cottage, you shall possess all the affection I have to bestow.”—Of how much good is seeming ill productive ! —“ Could I have believed I should bless the hour I wandered, almost perishing on the moor !” said Louisa ; “ yet that is the case ; for the troubles of the search are lost, in the treasure I have found.”

Louisa,

Louisa, by the advice of her friend, wrote to Lady Melville (as she knew her London residence) an account what had happened to her since she quitted the convent. At the same time, she informed her, she was now intirely out of the Earl's power. "And could I," said she, "remove the melancholy that preys on my benefactress, and pierce the veil of obscurity that surrounds myself, I were perfectly happy."

Though Louisa mentioned her friend, it was not by name; as that lady desired her to omit it, as she
would

would have no trace by which Mr. Rivers, if he yet lived, might know she existed.

“ If my Henry’s fortune,” said she, “ be recoverable, or Mrs. Rivers’s partiality should have remembered me in any bequest, he has the most right to it : content with what I have, I wish not to remind him of so unfortunate a creature. Another reason, my Louisa : Lady Melville, prompted by generosity, may come to fetch you hence ; and company, except those whose misfortunes lay claim to my
D humanity,

humanity, rob me of a portion of time I would otherways employ."

The letter was now dispatched by the old man who officiated as gardener, to put in the post at Kendal; at which place the answer was to be left.

Six weeks passed without any return; but the seventh brought the following from her friend Julia.

Spa.

"HOW much have I endured, my dear Louisa, by your long silence!

silence ! Though relieved from suspense, how painfully do I read over what you have suffered ! What blessings are due to the person you name your benefactress ! If the obligation can be repaid with wealth, we will not be ungrateful. If only gratitude can pay the debt, Louisa and her Julia will study through life to discharge it.

“ You will, no doubt, wonder at our being at Spa : we attended my father here two months since ; and, at the receipt of yours, we had the misfortune to lose him, eight days before Augustus joined

us, some time before his death; and the parent, whose severity we dreaded in his life, by his parting tenderness has given us lasting reason to lament. We shall be in England nearly as soon as this letter. Lady Melville entreats you will favour her with your company; for which purpose she will send the chaise to Kendal, to conduct you. And, would the Lady to whom you are so much obliged favour us likewise, the obligation would be double. She is melancholy. Ours is not the house of joy. Lady Melville shall sympathise with her; and her grateful Louisa and Julia will
force

force her to give their young hearts a portion of sorrow, which, when divided, will be the easier endured.

“ As I once offended you by pleading the cause of a lover, I promise to offend no more : the reason I will inform you of when we meet : till when, believe me impatient

“ JULIA.”

“ P. S. As you have not sent a direction to your habitation, the chaise will be at the principal inn in Kendal on the first of March.”

D 3

“ I am

“ I am extremely pleased with your amiable friend,” said Mrs. Rivers; “ yet a selfish thought almost rises, to wish you was intirely my own.”—“ And, after such a wish, my dear Madam,” returned Louisa, “ can I ever leave you, to whom I owe my preservation? No; Lady Melville is generous, and, when she is acquainted how happily I am situated, will not wish me pained by leaving it.”

“ Nor will I, for so selfish a consideration, imprison you amongst those desolate hills. Believe me, my child, this journey will be productive

ductive of good. Lady Melville's partiality will seek into the secret of your birth; which divulged, may remove the cloud that hangs on modest merit, unaccompanied by wealth. If that should be the case, I do not bid you remember me; your goodness of heart needs not that caution. I know you will sometimes think of the cottage, and the bosom that feels for you almost maternal tenderness; and, as I own a parent fondness, the care of that character must not be wanting. Mary shall go to Kendal, and buy things to equip you the best we can. Accompanied by her,

D 4

you

you shall meet your friends at the appointed time, to whose care she must resign you."

Louisa's thanks were better expressed in her eyes than by words. But as I make no doubt every one of my fair readers has experienced the heart-felt satisfaction of seeing eyes beam gratitude through tears, I shall not attempt to describe what can only be felt. But, in case any of those fair ones to whom I appeal should be unacquainted with the raptures of gratitude from a feeling mind, I conjure them to hasten to do a benevolent action. The sensation
it

it leaves, will spread a brighter glow on the complexion, than milk of roses or bloom of Circaffia.

Mary performed her mistress's promise ; and the next evening returned from Kendal, attended by the old man, bearing the materials for dress. As there did not happen to be either mantua-maker or millener nearer than the above-mentioned town, the ladies were forced to officiate in those capacities themselves : indeed nature had decorated them so abundantly, as to make fashion needless ; and a straw hat sat as becomingly on the artless looks

of Louisa, as a balloon or parachute bonnet on the tortured head of a modern belle.

The morning now arrived which was to part our friends, whom the cement of kindred minds united in bonds so strong as to make the separation painful: at length, however, they sighed their adieus; and Louisa, with slow step, and an eye oft cast back, lost sight of the friendly cottage.

Mary interrupted her reverie, by fearing she would be fatigued before they reached Kendal. “No, indeed,

deed, my dear Mrs. Bennet," said she, " you forget how far I must have wandered the night you received me : were I returning to Mrs. Rivers, the way might appear long ; but at present, my steps seem to move me too quickly away."

They reached the appointed place in safety, where the old man (as he was on horseback for the sake of carrying the baggage) was arrived before them.

" Can you inform me, Madam," said Mary, addressing the landlady,

D 6 if

if a carriage of the Countess of Melville's is here?"

"The Earl and his sister arrived last night, Madam," returned she; "I presume you are the lady they expect: give me leave to show you to the parlour; you are waited for with impatience."

The landlady led the way, and the next moment saw our young friends in each other's arms: indeed their raptures were so great, that Louisa overlooked Augustus, (now Lord Melville;) but, blushing, she acknowledged her error; claiming

claiming for excuse, she had no idea of meeting them; being honoured far above her merits by the Countess's sending the chaise.

“ And could you, my dear Miss Villars,” said he, “ imagine my mother would suffer you to travel so far alone, when her son and daughter were so proud of the charge? Are you so apt to forget your friends, that you think they can be so unmindful of you?”

“ I shall ever remember Lady Melville's kindness and your politeness, my Lord: but give me
leave,

leave, Lady Julia, to present my friend. To her, and one more lady, how much am I obliged! with them I almost forgot my misfortunes; and, had not a wish to know of the welfare of Lady Melville and my dear Julia interfered, never would I have changed it."

"A truce with your introduction," said Julia; "while you were paying your compliments, I was showing the advantage of a French education, and introducing myself. I have told her how much I am obliged, how much I love her, in half the time you would have given

to

to blushes and sentimental thanks. For this lady, (taking Mary by the hand,) I have a right to some of her affection, as I freely give you up a third of my mother's : that return will keep up the balance."

"My dear young lady," returned Mary, "it is not to me any thanks are due, but to my amiable mistress; to her I will convey them."

In short, our little company were mutually pleased with each other; till soon after dinner, Mary reminded Louisa she must bid her
farewell,

farewell, as the walk was long, and the old man slow.

“I wish not to intrude, Madam,” said Lord Melville; “but permit me to attend you: the chaise shall stop where you please; at some distance from your habitation, if most convenient; and Louisa will have the satisfaction of knowing you got home in safety.”

Our young friends over-ruled all Mary's objections; who, after an affectionate farewell, attended by Lord Melville, reached the old man's

man's cottage ; where, after repeated thanks, he bid her adieu.

Julia was not displeased to be alone with Louisa, as she wished to be more particularly informed of what had happened since their separation ; and likewise to repose in her bosom a reciprocal confidence.

“ About six months ago, my dear Louisa,” said she, “ my father grew visibly worse, and the gout seemed to threaten his stomach : we went, for change of air and amusement, to several of the watering-places, and lastly to Bath ;
at

at which place we received a letter from Madame du Saint, which mentioned your removal, and her fears on your account. As I had promised Augustus to acquaint him with all the news I heard concerning you, I communicated this unwelcome intelligence; and the return of the post brought letters from him to my father, to entreat his permission to return home; (like a true knight-errant, I suppose, to seek his mistress). But that very day my father had been advised to go to Spa; and, instead of the expected permission, my Mother's letters

letters desired Augustus to meet us at that place.

Strict orders were left at the town-house, if any letters came, to forward them with all possible dispatch, as we were in continual expectation of hearing from you. Augustus joined us three days after our arrival at Spa; but so pale, so dispirited, that Lady Melville began to fear almost as much for him as my father. Lord Castlebrook came with him to Spa. You know he showed me some little attentions at Abbeville; and travelling did not seem to have made him forget his
former

former penchant. Whether it was his kindness to my brother, or that I feared, being naturally humane, reducing him to a similar state with Augustus, I certainly heard him with complaisance; which he interpreting to his own advantage, one day, in my absence, made proposals to Lord and Lady Melville, which ended in his obtaining the Earl's consent, and my being desired to receive his visits. Some days after this, what we dreaded, happened; the gout reached the Earl's stomach, and deprived me of a parent. Though Lord Melville was naturally severe, and did not
make

make the allowance for youth and inattention which some parents can; yet was he possessed of an excellent heart, and my mother mourned him with unfeigned sorrow. In this state your letter found us; and in weeping over your troubles we half forgot our own. Though then assured of your safety, I believe Augustus painfully withheld himself from setting out post for England, which we only reached eight days since; that being as soon as Lady Melville could travel, who is now not more than a hundred and forty miles from us, at her seat in Nottinghamshire."

" Happy

“ Happy and proud as I am, my dear Julia,” said Louisa, “ at Lady Melville’s and your partiality for me; I am hurt at your hinting, Lord Melville remembers what I had hopes was quite forgotten : nay, your own letter flattered me it was so : you said you would plead no more in his favour ; which made me conjecture he had made a worthier choice, and you had seen your former imprudence. But never will I wear a disguise with Lady Melville : to her will I disclose all ; then retire to my beloved cottage, till Lord Melville, actuated by nobler motives, shall do justice to himself

himself and family." Louisa would have continued, but a suppressed sigh shook her voice, and almost discovered her words did violence to her inclinations.

"And so," said Julia laughing, "to answer you methodically:—First, you are sorry my brother still loves you. Pardon me if I disbelieve you a little.—Secondly, I promised to plead no more for him. Agreed: if so handsome a fellow as Augustus, with fourteen thousand a year cannot plead for himself, let him go without for Julia.—Thirdly, you will inform Lady Melville.

Melville. There, my dear girl, Augustus has the advantage of you; he has told already; and the first informer has always the best of the story.—And fourthly and lastly, for myself, I think it is best you treat my brother with lenity, and become my sister, (customary forms observed,) as soon as convenient; as that will cut off Danvers's hopes intirely, and prevent him and Augustus quarrelling. For Lord Danford, if he dare dissent, the law shall force him to do justice."

" And were the whole world to consent, pardon my pride, Julia,"

faid

said Louisa, never would I give an unknown beggar to the arms of the man I esteem.

“ Well, well,” returned Julia, “ I know you and I shall never agree on this matter ; so must leave you to wiser heads than mine.”

Our young friends now changed the subject, and chatted on indifferent matters, till the return of Lord Melville. “ I have done myself the pleasure, Miss Villars,” said he, “ to attend your friend as far as she would permit : she excused herself from accepting my company farther,

saying, the road was impassable for a carriage, and the old man was a sufficient safeguard; as vice sought more frequented paths than those untrodden mountains. Seeing I should oblige her by my absence, I bid her adieu. But is it possible women can assume courage enough to live alone in this unfrequented moor?"

"Very possible, my Lord," returned Louisa: "What have the virtuous to fear? Beside, the habitation is so lost between the hills, that no one but a wanderer like myself could have found it. In the

two

two months that I have been there, never have I seen a human creature but those of the cottage where you left Mrs. Bennet : even the butcher that supplied us with meat, weekly, left it at that place. My friend, though possessed of no superfluities, has ever a hand and heart open to the unfortunate : with the happy she has no intercourse : dead to her friends, she wishes to be so to all the world. She has honoured me by acquainting me with her misfortunes ; yet am I not at liberty to disclose either those, or her name. Suffice it, to see her is to admire her, to know her is to love her, and

parting from her is painful. So totally is she sequestered, that though she has reason to think a good fortune recoverable, she would rather relinquish that than mix with the world, to which she has taken so bitter a distaste."

"Every blessing attend her," returned Lord Melville; "and may she never meet an intruder who venerates her virtues less than myself!"

Our young friends chatted away the evening, till the clock struck twelve; at which time the ladies wished Lord Melville a good night.

The

The next morning they began their journey ; Julia and Louisa in the chaise, Lord Melville on horseback, and three servants attending. But little passed on the way, except affectionate attention on one side, and blushing on the other. We will pass over the three days which brought them safe to West Park ; where Lady Melville received Louisa in a manner which plainly evinced, merit to her was more estimable than gold.

Lord Castlebrook became their visitant soon after, not at all to the dislike of Julia ; whose tongue,
E 3
indeed,

indeed, spoke the language of unconcern; whilst her eyes, directed only by nature, sparkled with added brightness.

For Lord Melville, actuated by an honourable passion, sought not to disguise it: he viewed Louisa with admiration, and spoke of her with rapture. Nor was Lady Melville less partial: she carefully watched her son, and young friend; hoping to find mutual affection: but Louisa, more guarded than Julia, gave no reason to suppose, she felt more than esteem, except now and then a rebel sigh escaped her at any particular attention paid her by the Earl.

Thus

Thus situated were our lovers; when the Countess, being one day alone with Louisa, addressed her as follows: " I have for some time watched you with an inquiring eye, my dear Louisa: Augustus lives but in your presence: my peace, I own, is centered in his. I have not been able to judge, if you see him with the partiality I could wish: if you do, I shall be happy to embrace, as my daughter, her who already possesses my affection: if otherwise, though disappointed, believe me, Louisa, my friendship shall never leave you."

“ My dear Madam,” returned Louisa, “ in what manner are you addressing a wretched girl, whose only pride is her dependance on Lady Melville ! You say, the Earl’s happiness depends on me——Ah ! Madam, were fortune and birth mine, my heart would quickly make return ; or were I only poor, your generosity would make me forget that : but to have the man I esteem beyond the whole world, pointed at for marrying a woman who knew not her own parents—believe me, I could not support it.”

“ Indeed, Louisa,” returned the Countess, “ I did not imagine you
so

so proud : but Lord Danford shall be obliged to own your birth. After such base behaviour, he dares not claim you ; or, if he should, my interest is as great as his. Besides, you are of an age to choose another guardian ; which you shall do when we remove to town. In the mean time, if you can see Augustus with partiality, happy with each other, you may smile at the world, and despise its calumny : but, in case you do not approve him, I should be sorry he should nourish a passion that would imbitter his future days."

" Ah, Madam !" said Louisa,
 " pardon me ; my heart's above

my situation: did I possess worlds, I could be happy to be allied to Lady Melville; but, as it is, how must I be wounded to feel myself the only blemish in an honourable family!"

"Think of this matter at your leisure, Louisa," returned Lady Melville; "nor let an over-strained delicacy deprive you of real happiness. For the present, retire; and calm a confusion visible in your looks; nor let Augustus and Julia guess my business by your disorder. He must be his own advocate: I only mention my wishes."

Louisa

Louisa did not stay for a second permission to retire, but hastened to her chamber. "Why do my cruel stars," said she, "oblige me to refuse the amiable Lord Melville? Why did we ever meet? My heart, already agonised, needed no fresh pang: for, should I accept his generous offer, may not time dissolve the charm that blinds his senses? Conscious of my inequality, I may be content without his affection; but his dislike would be too hard to bear."

So ruminated Louisa; till, suddenly recollecting herself, she deter-

mined to acquaint her friend Mrs. Rivers with what had past—intreat her counsel, and follow implicitly her opinion. Thus determined, she immediately wrote to her, directing it, as she had been desired, (*To Mrs. Bennet, Post-house, Kendal*). By the time she had finished, her heart beat lighter; and she joined her friends, tolerably composed.

Two posts passed, but the third brought her the following answer.

“ My dear child !

“ BY the soft ties of affection, cemented by misfortune, thou art
mine,

mine, Louisa, in lieu of her, whom Grief deprived of life before she felt the tender pressure of a parent's arm—before the maternal tear had bedewed, or busy meddling Memory had traced one feature of her loved, lost father. With submission to the Divine will, still will I look forward to the moment we shall be again united; and revere that never-erring Providence, whose wise dispensation translated my hapless infant from this bitter draught of misery. Encompassed with sorrow, lost to the world and its pursuits, how should I have guided her amidst the stormy paths of life! Yet you,

Louisa,

Louisa, have forced me to feel an interest beyond the cottage walls. Your welfare oft employs thoughts, and hours, formerly given to contemplation. Your youth, your inexperience, need a guide. Where can you find so safe a one as in the happiness that courts you? I know you love Lord Melville; Why make yourself voluntarily unhappy by refusing him? Why plant thorns in the bosoms of Lady Melville, and your friend Julia? I know you have a high sense of favours: Will this be a kind return for those received from this amiable family? One moment's recollection, your
scruples

scruples will vanish. By making them happy, you seal your own.

“ I have no doubt but Lady Melville will oblige your late guardian to discover your family; in the knowledge of which, should any circumstance arise that may appear painful, I conjure you to dispel it: no happiness is perfect. 'Tis an offence to the Almighty to repine at what cannot be avoided: receive not his present bounty with an unthankful heart. Forgive me, my dear Louisa; I trust this caution will be unnecessary: yet I would have you fore-armed, let
what

what will happen. In Lady Melville you will have a mother—in me, a sympathising friend—in Lord Melville, a dearer friend than either. I speak thus candidly, as I feel your happiness is necessary towards maintaining the tranquillity (with so much difficulty established) in my own breast. Were you not mutually enamoured of each other, I would be the last to press you to enter a state, which nothing but an union of souls can make perfectly happy. The glare of riches is deceitful; and the pleasures they bring too cloying to be lasting: the chimaera soon vanishes, and leaves the
mind

mind whose happiness was built on so transitory a foundation, to seek a new. Divest Lord Melville of fortune, he is young, sensible, handsome; and, what is still superior, he is virtuous; loves you with unbounded passion. You entertain the same sentiments for him. Thus situated, had you only enough to procure the conveniencies of life between you, I should be the first to advise you to let your hand follow your heart. Banish then, my sweet girl, the giant Pride; 'twill stride over Happiness; which, when far outstripped, will cast a wishful look, and heave a then unavailing sigh.

sigh. Thus, my loved child, have I given you my sentiments freely; perhaps you may think too freely: but my heart is my pen; and the future peace of Louisa seems to be the gleam of comfort wanting to the declining hours of

“ MARIA RIVERS.”

Louisa read her friend's letter with delight, as much for the friendship of the writer, as for the advice; which her own heart prompted her to pursue. “ Well,” said she, kissing the letter, and pressing it to her bosom, “ I will think this a mother's permission.

Pleasing

Pleasing idea!—I will be Lord Melville's; and endeavour, by assiduity and tenderness, to make him forget the disproportion heaven has placed between us. Yes, generous Augustus, I will no longer force my features to wear the cold traits of indifference, but return a passion fervent as thine; tempered alone with feminine delicacy and gratitude."

Louisa's soliloquy had probably continued some time longer, had she not seen, from her window, Lady Melville, attended by her young friends, crossing a walk at
some

some distance from the house. Hastily placing her hat, she determined to join them : but they were too distant to be immediately overtaken ; and the walk being serpentine, made the search more difficult. For a while she walked in fruitless expectation. At length, turning round a winding of this leafy maze, she suddenly met Lord Melville alone, his eyes and thoughts deeply fixed on a little portrait, which he seemed to view with inexpressible tenderness. If this sudden meeting disconcerted Louisa, Lord Melville was scarcely less confused ; but, returning the miniature to his bosom

som (which, indeed, appeared its
 common residence, as 'twas fixed
 there by a ribband), he first broke
 silence. " This is unexpected hap-
 pinefs, my amiable Miss Villars.
 My mother deprived herself and us
 of the pleasure of your company
 in our walk ; as you were, she said,
 engaged by letters you had just re-
 ceived. Accompanied by Julia, she
 has just left me, to visit some poor
 pensioners. When I parted from
 them, I had no idea of being so
 greatly compensated for their ab-
 sence." Indeed, my Lord," re-
 turned Louisa, " I did not expect to
 meet you alone, and am extremely
 sorry

sorry to break in upon your contemplation." To say the truth, the fiend Jealousy, who often lies in wait to give the hearts of lovers a pang, found an avenue in that of Louisa, where he hastily entered, and shed his baneful influence.

"Am I ever doomed," said Lord Melville, "my dearest Louisa, to give you sorrow, in what occasions me the highest rapture! The company of my mother and sister is pleasing; but yours alone, sweet maid, would almost make me forget the Deity created more than your fair self."

"I

“ I fancy,” returned Louisa,
 “ Gentlemen are so accustomed to
 compliment, that sometimes they
 bestow them indiscriminately, at
 the trifling expence of sincerity.”

“ Unkind surmise !” replied he,
 “ when you know I should think
 my life and fortune cheaply bestowed,
 to purchase you content !—A
 fortune, if you refuse to share, I
 will abandon. Yes, Louisa, if you
 hate me, England, friends, fortune,
 all, will I leave, accompanied only
 by one, who, though a faint resemblance
 of you, will always cheer
 my heart with a smile.”

“ I

“ I have ever thought it the greatest misfortune to yourself and family, my Lord,” said Louisa, “ the partiality with which you have honoured me ; but too dearly should I pay for that partiality, by accepting a divided heart. The face that, perhaps unknowing half your virtues, can always meet you with a smile—a smile which you own can drive sorrow from your breast—what may it not effect!—Time will ripen esteem to love—and you will, I hope, be completely blest.” Louisa would have continued, but restrained sighs made utterance painful; and she endeavoured

to

to conceal her feelings from her lover, by quitting him: but he, on whom her emotion was not lost, catching her hand, “ You must not leave me, Louisa,” said he; “ I have never offered you a divided heart. I call Heaven to witness, I have no happiness, but what is centered in you; to behold you with rapture when present, and contemplate your loved image when absent: as witness, when you met me, who was my companion.”—So saying, he drew the portrait from his bosom, and presented the image of herself. —“ Behold, Louisa,” said he, “ is there not serenity and gentleness

enough in this angelic face, to banish painful feelings, and make the soul all harmony? 'Tis plain to a common observer. How much more conspicuous to me, who have hung hours on each feature with increasing rapture! From the first time I saw you, I found you so essential to my peace, that I determined to persuade the painter, to whom you sat, to execute two pictures, instead of one. He obliged me: and I left Abbeville, triumphing in the stratagem by which I possessed so great a treasure; vainly hoping the time would come, when I might repeat my vows to the

Original

Original that daily I offered to her shrine. Bitter disappointment!—My passion is only endured, as I am the son and brother of two much-esteemed friends.”

“You accuse me unjustly,” replied Louisa: “I esteem Lord Melville, exclusive of the love I bear his mother and sister; and my unhappy prospects in life are more his enemy than my sentiments.”—“A mi-
amiable condescension! But should I be fortunate enough to clear the ambiguity which gives you so much uneasiness, may I hope you will share a fortune of no value to me

without your acceptance? Promise, say you will not reject a man who adores you."—"I know not how to answer you, my Lord," returned Louisa: "should you be successful, and my origin not bring disgrace with it, I—I"——"Nay, no conditions," interrupted Lord Melville: "on whom would you not confer honour? Banish these humiliating notions, which I am convinced you will find groundless." Julia at this moment made her appearance; perhaps never less to the satisfaction of her brother, though much to the relief of Louisa, who began to find her situation very awkward;

awkward ; as her tongue seemed almost to have forgot the lessons her head had taught it, and acted as auxiliary to her heart. “ Indeed, good folks” (said Julia, laughing), “ I think you might have had politeness enough to inform me of this assignation : I would have brought my Strephon, and made a *partie quarrée*. We might have chimed in all together so prettily, with Love and Dove, and Dart and Part : but you were so selfish to have only a duet, though you knew my enlivening strains would have been of infinite service to the concert.”

“The assignation, my wild sister, as you are pleased to term it, was merely accidental,” said Lord Melville: “Miss Villars came to seek you. I was fortunate enough to meet her, and intreat to be her escort.”

“And you sought me—everywhere but where I was to be found. We have been at home this half hour. But, à-propos—I came to tell you dinner waits. Louisa, will you never leave of that abominable habit of blushing? I am shocked to think a French education so ill bestowed; for you have imported

as much *mauvaise honte*, as though you had been bred in a Northern village all your life: for Heaven's sake, don't take bashfulness to London with you! I shall have you celebrated by the name of The Handsome Villager. If you will but take pattern by me, I have no doubt we shall be the *ton* next winter, and reap the inexpressible delight of giving the jaundice to every belle that dares oppose our conquests."

"I had rather, my dear sister," said Lord Melville, "that you would take a lesson from Louisa.

The Handsome Villager will be a more pleasing name than The Mortified Coquette, which I fancy is often the fate of your sisters of the ton."

"Well said, Sir Gravity," replied Julia: "What! you would wish to engross all our smiles? But I say, No—Let our charms shine at large, and cheer all mankind with their beams."

"I am happy," returned Louisa, "to think my beams are too weak to spread their influence far, as that may

may prevent the receiving compliments I know not how to answer."

"A compliment well asked, however, child," said Julia. "Pay it for me, Augustus, I am not in the humour."

The Ladies now accepted each an arm of Lord Melville, and hastened home to dinner.

The time now arrived, when Lady Melville and family were to go to London; a period that Lady had hastened on purpose, to endeavour to be satisfied, if possible, of the birth of her intended daughter.

Our friends travelled for two days. On the second morning, as Louisa and Julia were observing, from the inn-window, a number of travellers ascending their different vehicles; a Gentleman, who had likewise passed the night there, received his horse from the hostler; which before he mounted, turning to give some orders to his servant, Louisa had a full view of his features. "Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed she; "as I live, the generous stranger who rescued me from Danvers!—Fortunate rencounter! if I have your Ladyship's permission" (turning to Lady Melville)

to my daughter. "to

“to again thank him, and exculpate myself from the thought of ingratitude?”

Lady Melville answered by pulling the bell, to order the servant to intreat the stranger's company; but Augustus, with action quick as Louisa's wishes, flew into the court-yard, and, gracefully moving his hat to the Gentleman, who was on the point of departure, intreated his company a moment; as a Lady, to whom he had rendered a singular service, begged to see him. The stranger instantly dismounted, and followed his conductor to the parlour, where the Ladies were sitting,

but instantly rose at his appearance.

“ I hope you will excuse the liberty we have taken to detain you, my good Sir,” said Lady Melville; “ but, when Louisa recognised you, we could not resist the inclination of returning our thanks.”

“ And I,” continued Louisa, “ could not bear that one to whom I was so much obliged, should think I so soon forgot the favour conferred on me, as to decline bidding you farewell.”

“ My dear Madam,” replied the stranger, “ you owe me no thanks; the little service I was fortunate
enough

enough to render you, is overpaid by seeing you in health and safety; and the prudence of your companion was perhaps laudable, as I asked questions that might truly be termed impertinent."

"The obligations conferred on me," answered Louisa, "and the situation from which you rescued me, might surely claim an answer to any question you would ask."

The stranger bowed an acknowledgement; and the conversation became universal.

"If

“ If you journey towards London, Sir, we shall be much honoured by such an addition to our company,” said Lady Melville.

“ The honour is conferred on me,” said the stranger ; “ and I accept it with pleasure. My stay in London will be short, as I only pass through there in my return to the Continent. I have already remained longer in England than I at first purposed ; but the situation in which I found a near relation, prevented my departure, and kept me in a kingdom which nothing but
the

the commands of a dying friend could have forced me to revisit."

"Yet, you are an Englishman?" said Lord Melville. "I am, and glory in the name," replied he; "yet in it I lost all that could make any country dear to me: since which, I have constantly avoided it. When I first met your young friend, I was just arrived. The striking resemblance she bears to a person whose memory is very dear to me, induced me to ask her conductress questions, which I believe prevented my seeing her again; as,—to what part of England she was going?"

going?—what fortune she possessed? (having herself informed me she was an orphan). The freedom I used, met with its reproof; for she civilly thanked me for my trouble (as she termed it)—assured me your habitation was far distant—your fortune affluent—and henceforward her vigilance should protect you from needing the assistance of strangers. After favouring me with this information, she stepped into the chaise which was to conduct her to you, bidding me farewell in a manner that convinced me all efforts to see you again would be fruitless.”

“ On

"On our arrival in town," said Lady Melville, "we will answer the questions she evaded: Louisa must not so soon part from a friend she has so much wished to see."

Every thing being ready for the Ladies' departure, they left the inn, and arrived safe at their town residence, attended by Lords Melville and Castlebrook, and the stranger, who informed them his name was Belmont.

The morning after their arrival, Julia and Louisa, escorted by their lovers, took a walk in the Park.

When

When Lady Melville and Mr. Belmont were alone, he genteelly reminded her of her promise of giving him some information of Louisa. "Think not, Madam," said he, "I ask out of impertinent curiosity; but when I had the happiness of rescuing her from Danvers, in her agitation she told me she was a friendless orphan. I wish to be serviceable to her; as Heaven has lent me a fortune, on which every Child of Sorrow shall have a claim."

"Your generosity, my good Sir," returned the Lady, "demands our confidence; and I will inform you,

as

as much as she knows herself, of her own history."

She then related what the reader already knows; concluding with assuring him, nothing could give her higher satisfaction than seeing Louisa the wife of her son.

Mr. Belmont listened to the Lady with the deepest attention, nor once interrupted her; though compassion and horror had alternately marked his features during the recital.

"I had firmly determined to quit London to-morrow," said he, "but
own

own I should be glad to see your amiable charge relieved from her doubts. I have some little acquaintance with Lord Danford; and, with your permission, will use my interest to obtain the secret. The alliance with your son he cannot object to, being so highly advantageous. Other motives he will be ashamed to own. I think he will be in town in a short time; which I will wait with pleasure, if I can render any service to one so very deserving."

Lady Melville accepted Mr. Belmont's offer, with thanks; for the
bene-

benevolence which animated his whole conduct, set suspicion at defiance, and made the Lady happy at having found a person she had no doubt would execute his commission with honour and integrity.

Our young friends returned home, and retired to dress. While they were thus employed, Lord Melville's servant delivered him the following:

“ MY LORD,

“ I HAD the mortification, about two hours since, of seeing you in the Park with Miss Villars; so lost
in

in the happiness of your situation, that I passed unobserved. As I don't feel my affection for that Lady the least diminished, am determined to give up my pretensions only with my life.—What time and place you may think convenient, should be glad to be informed by the bearer.

“DANVERS.”

Lord Melville, we are sorry to say, received the above with pleasure. He had wished earnestly to meet with Danvers, and revenge the affront of Louisa. The opportunity till now had not offered; as quitting the country to seek him, would

would have alarmed those he wished free of every inquietude. The means now in his power, he hesitated not a moment in returning the following answer:

“SIR,

“Indispensable obligations kept me in the country, or before this I should have had the honour of meeting you. About six, to-morrow morning, behind Montague-house, we may settle the difference.

“MELVILLE.

P. S. “Lord Castlebrook will accompany me.”

The

The company met at dinner; after which Lord Melville found an opportunity to acquaint his friend Castlebrook, and desire him to accompany him in the morning. He then ordered his carriage, and went to his attorney, whom he obliged to make his will; bequeathing his ready money, to the amount of forty thousand pounds, to Louisa; the estate wholly descending to his sister, in case of his death without heirs. This point settled, he returned home perfectly satisfied; and the evening past cheerfully on every part but Mr. Belmont's, whose extreme gravity nothing could relax.

Lord

Lord Melville was not unmindful of his appointment; and, before the time, attended by his friend, repaired to the rendezvous; where he was soon joined by his adversary, who was likewise accompanied. The Gentlemen moved their hats to each other. "I am extremely sorry, my Lord," said Mr. Danvers, "to be forced to this step, with a man I ever esteemed my friend; but you knew I had made the offer of my hand and fortune to Miss Villars, before you ever addressed her."

"Excuses, Sir," said Lord Melville coolly, "are needless: indeed,

none can palliate your conduct: therefore deeds are better than words." So saying, he received his pistols from Lord Castlebrook. His antagonist was not backward in following his example; and each discharged without effect. Danvers fired his second with as little success; but Lord Melville, throwing his a distance from him, drew his sword, and called on Danvers to do the same: "Come on, Sir," said he; "I will not take the advantage my remaining pistol gives me; I fight for Innocence and Virtue—at any weapon, I am sure to conquer."

Mr.

Mr. Danvers was not twice desired; and for some minutes they fought as men who determined to lose or take a life. At length, Fortune, who appeared to have held the scale impartially during the combat, for they had given wound for wound, seemed to incline for Lord Melville; and he disarmed his antagonist.

“Take your life, Sir,” said he, restoring Danvers’ sword; “for the present, we have both enough: hereafter, if you are not satisfied, I am to be found.”——“I have enough, indeed,” returned Danvers;

“Miss Villars with me will be soon forgotten.” As he spoke, he staggered; and, had not his friend caught him, must have fallen to the ground: for Lord Castlebrook no sooner saw the combat ended, than he flew for a surgeon he had ordered to wait in a coach at some distance, who immediately applied something to stop the effusion of blood; after which, they were taken to his house, to have their wounds properly dressed; which, on examination, were found equally dangerous. Mr. Danvers was immediately put to bed. Lord Melville peremptorily refused. “My absence,”

absence," said he, " will alarm my friends more than my appearance: go first, Castlebrook; tell them I am only slightly wounded, but not by whom; and I will return in a chair."

Lord Castlebrook set out on his disagreeable errand. The amiable family were at breakfast. He disclosed to them, in the gentlest manner, the situation of his friend; suppressing intirely that his wounds were dangerous.

'Tis impossible to paint the distress of the Ladies; for never

was son, brother, or lover, dearer. Louisa had fixed her eyes on Lord Castlebrook, at the beginning of the recital, with an anxiety that plainly indicated how much she was concerned; but, before she heard the conclusion, the blood forsook her cheek—her lips trembled—the cup dropped from her hand—and she fainted. Tears coming to the relief of Lady Melville and Julia, prevented their suffering equally. Nor was their concern lessened by the arrival of Lord Melville, whose pallid looks made them conjecture him much worse than Lord Castlebrook had told them.

Mr.

Mr. Belmont did not see this scene unmoved. He knew how unavailing to a wounded heart was the language of consolation; so attempted it not, but bent all his cares to see Lord Melville properly attended, as his health was the balm to restore the peace of this worthy family.

After the first alarm of Lady Melville was over, she inquired particularly with whom her son had fought. Lord Castlebrook assured her (by Lord Melville's desire) the Gentleman was quite a stranger.

Lord Melville had exerted his utmost strength, to be brought home : he was no sooner in bed, but his wounds, from the exertion, bled afresh, and greatly alarmed even the surgeon.

For some time he was thought in a dangerous state ; during which he was attended with the greatest tenderness by the Ladies. His pillow was never so smooth as when placed by Louisa—nor was the cup from her hand ever refused. His danger made her feel how much she esteemed him ; and her former wishes for birth and fortune were forgot, in the

the dread of losing the man for whom she wished to possess them.

While things were in this state at Lord Melville's, they were yet worse with Mr. Danvers, whose wounds were attended with a fever, which gave great reason to fear the termination would be fatal. He earnestly intreated the faculty to give him their opinion candidly; which, though done in the gentlest manner, could not fail to alarm him. He immediately sent for a lawyer, to settle his affairs; after which, he desired him to write a letter himself would dictate.

“ To Miss LOUISA VILLARS.”

“ Madam,

“ **T**HOUGH apprised of the horror you will feel on receiving a letter from me, yet I flatter myself that passion will give way to a softer sensation, when you know the man so hated will soon expiate his follies with his life. Believe me when I say, I loved you—most honourably loved you—and, at the time I stole you from Dover, I had no intention but of being united to you by the most sacred ties, would you have consented—if not, I cannot
answer

answer what would have been the consequence. Driven to despair by your loss, I wrote to Lord Danford; whose answer was,—You had withdrawn yourself from his protection, he knew not where. But of this enough. The sole occasion of my writing, is to wish you as happy with Lord Melville as you deserve to be, and that he may be as sensible of your worth as the unhappy

“DANVERS.”

P. S. “I rejoice to hear Lord Melville is better. For my death, let it not concern him; the deed was wholly mine.”

The above was no sooner written than dispatched, as directed, by a trusty servant of Mr. Danvers, and delivered as she was sitting alone. "A letter for me!" said she; "'tis from my charming friend, and will bring peace with it." On casting her eye on the superscription, however, she was soon convinced it was not from Mrs. Rivers, as that Lady's hand-writing was perfectly known to her. Curiosity made her hastily tear it open; but, on perusal of the contents, her senses seemed suspended, and mute astonishment took possession of her features. At length she started, exclaiming, "Well,

“ Well, well, good Heaven ! for what am I reserved ! How many misfortunes am I to feel, or cause others to endure, before my hard heart will sink under the weight of its calamities ! Wherever I go, I spread desolation ! Even my friends are involved in the destruction that surrounds me. Generous Augustus ! what sorrows have I involved you in ! Lady Melville—Julia—all—all must execrate me ! ”

As she spoke louder than usual, her last words struck the ears of Mr. Belmont, who was reading in the next room. He immediately
threw

threw down his book, and, with more friendship than politeness, rushed into the room. "What is the matter, Miss Villars?—Your voice alarmed me—Are you ill?"—"No, Sir," replied she; "I am well, too well; but, I conjure you, leave me. I respect, I honour you; that is sufficient for some of my misfortunes to reach and overwhelm you."

"You suffer your gentle spirits," returned he, "to be too much depressed: I have no doubt Lord Melville will do well."

"You

“ You do not know, perhaps,” said she, “ that I am the occasion of Mr. Danvers’ death, and most likely Lord Melville’s—and, if so, his mother cannot survive him—that will be my return for their generous friendship !”

“ Mr. Danvers,” replied Mr. Belmont, “ is the cause of his own misfortunes—he challenged Lord Melville; who acquainted me, as soon as he was brought home, who had wounded him. I had hopes it would have escaped your knowledge, till he was recovered; so, I conjure you, bear up, my good girl, and
do

do not protract his cure by your sorrow."

"Heaven forbid!" replied she, sighing: "all I intreat is, that you would disclose to Lady Melville the cause of my grief—tell her, I cannot, must not, see her—I have robbed her of her son, and am not to be forgiven. Give her Danvers' letter, and beg her to pity me."

"Retire to your chamber," said he, "and try to compose yourself: I will go to Lady Melville, and disclose this affair to her; 'tis better she learn it of me, than from your bursts of sorrow."

He

He then took her by the hand, and led her to the door of her chamber; after which, he hastened to find Lady Melville, to whom he disclosed the foregoing scene. Mr. Belmont had no occasion to exert his power of persuasion, to obtain the pity of the Lady; who, though much grieved at the situation of her son, had a heart too generous to harbour rancour at the innocent occasion of the mishap—"Sweet, grateful girl," said she, "what has she ever seen in me, to dread my presence? Can she think me so unjust, to blame her for what she feels as sensibly as myself, and of which

which she is equally innocent? She must not remain in such an error—I will go and convince her she injures me by such a surmise; and that her happiness is as dear to me as my son's, who, I hope, will live to repay us both for the uneasiness this rash step of his has occasioned."

She went directly to Louisa's chamber, whom she found in a situation that really alarmed her. Her eyes were swollen with weeping: but tears had now subsided; and silent sorrow, that refused consolation, had taken their place; and

and every lenient gentle word Lady Melville used, could obtain no other answer, than unconnected thanks, and repetitions of her own unworthiness. The Countess intreated her to go to bed; as she had hopes rest would compose her spirits, and restore their wonted tranquillity. But those hopes were fruitless; for, after passing a sleepless night, during which she alternately laughed and wept, the physician, in the morning, pronounced her in a high fever. To hide her illness from Lord Melville was impossible; to tell the real reason was equally so; and a cold was made the excuse for her
not

not appearing in his chamber, as usual.

Louisa's fever did not give way to the common remedies, but increased to such a height as set medicine at defiance. In this state her wounded imagination made her again endure every misfortune she had before suffered——Again she thought herself in Danvers' power, and implored the help of Mr. Belmont——again she stabbed Lord Danford, and wept the misguided hand that spared her own bosom. At other times, more composed, she would sing in a voice so piercing, as would have

have found its way to the most obdurate heart.

Every thing in so unpromising a situation, Lady Melville could scarcely conceal her concern; for it seemed impossible for Louisa to recover; and, if so, she had every reason to dread the loss of her son. As to Julia, her passions were not tempered like Lady Melville's; and the laughing graces, which used to dwell in her eyes, were washed away by the tears which perpetually wet her cheeks.

Fresh excuses were every day invented, to hide the real state of
 Louisa

Louisa from Lord Melville; who, as he could not leave his bed, was forced to appear to believe what he was told; though the melancholy of Lady Melville, and the swollen eyes of Julia, filled him with the most cruel apprehensions he was deceived.

Mr. Belmont, though he ceased to hope any information he might gain from Lord Danford would be of use to Louisa, could not determine to leave so deserving a family in such a scene of distress: he therefore waited the event, with a tender feeling for their troubles, but with a resignation Christian fortitude

fortitude only can inspire. He saw Louisa every day—he knelt by her side—he intreated the Power in whom he trusted, to spare her: for much did he esteem her. Her youth and gentleness—but, above all, her misfortunes—had won upon his native philanthropy, and forced him to hold a converse with the world he had long declined.

One day, when Lady Melville and Julia were both in Louisa's chamber, watching the event of a long sleep they almost feared would be her last, she awoke with more composure than from the beginning
of

of her illness, and, casting her eyes round, perfectly knew them. “ My dear, best friends, how much do I trouble you !” said she—“ Give me each a hand—Pardon me, Lady Melville, what I am the occasion of; and inform me if Lord Melville lives.”—“ He does,” returned she, transported to hear her speak sensibly—“ he lives to reward you for your sufferings, and to bless me by your mutual happiness.”—“ No, my dear Madam, that is past,” replied she. “ I once was vain enough to hope some such thing, and that the malice of my fate was spent; but the delusion’s over—I am

am hastening to a land where I can only know peace. That Lord Melville is better, I look to Heaven with thanks—his death would have been too severe a blow. Spared from that, I can bear the rest.”—

“ Yet more,” said Julia; “ Danvers will recover; so, my dear girl, do not give way to such gloomy ideas: you restored to health is all we want to make us happy.”—“ Heaven’s will be done!” returned Louisa; “ but, as I know my senses are very unsettled, one thing I would intreat, now I have an interval of reason, is, that you would write to my friend on the moor—say to her, I had not a wish unsatisfied,

but to see her, and receive her blessing, and bid her adieu till we meet again in a better world.—But I feel myself faint, and must hasten to inform you how your letter may find her.”

She then told them the usual direction to Mrs. Bennet; and, being much exhausted, again attempted to compose herself: which interval Lady Melville employed in writing the desired letter, which she dispatched express.

Louisa had no return of her delirium; which gave them great hopes: but, so much had her former

mer

mer ravings exhausted her, that it was almost impossible to hear her speak.

Gold gave the courier speed, and he reached the post-house at Kendal the third day after his departure from London. He was soon directed to the old man's cottage; to the humble master of which he delivered the letter.

The old man desired the stranger to seat himself, and he would soon return with an answer; for which purpose he hurried to his benevolent mistress.—“A letter for me—

and by such a conveyance!" said she — "what can it be?" and, before she perused the contents, cast her eye on the signature. "From Lady Melville! Good Heaven, preserve my Louisa!" She then ran over the contents with a concern true tenderness can only feel. "Well, Mary," said she, "our Louisa is, by this, perhaps, an angel—But, on the supposition she still lives, she has expressed a wish to see me. Indeed, the desire is mutual; and, though I never thought of quitting my cottage, if you, with your usual kindness, will accompany me, I think we will venture to London.

I am

I am dear to her—she is equally so to me—and shall I not give her the trivial satisfaction of seeing me?"

Mary, who seldom dissented from her mistress, agreed immediately; and, as mourning weeds, when worn with a heart applicable to the habit, take little arranging, our Ladies were soon ready.

The messenger returned with them; and they were little more time in reaching the Capital than he had been in bringing the news.

Mrs. Rivers had been so long from the world, that she had per-

haps forgot the complimentary salutations; and her first question was of Louisa. Lady Melville informed her she was still living, and to all appearance better; at which the Lady expressed much pleasure, but desired Louisa might be informed of her arrival in as gentle a manner as possible. Julia joyfully undertook the task, and hastened to Louisa's chamber, who was so much better, as to be able to sit up in bed, supported by pillows, while Mr. Belmont was paying her his usual visit. "My sweet girl," said Julia, "I have some news to tell, which must give you infinite pleasure; only promise not to be too much surprised

surprised—You have some visitors just arrived.”—“ Who are they ?” said Louisa faintly, “ that you would prepare me for their reception. I know no one whose appearance can give me so much delight, as those already here, except my friends on the moor, or Madame du Saint ; and those will never leave their habitations : so, my dear Julia, you need not fear to tell me ; for things that are indifferent can neither overpower us with joy nor sorrow.”—“ But, suppose,” replied Julia, “ some of those wished-for friends should be here, can you receive them without the surprise injuring

your weak spirits?"—"Good Heaven!" answered she, "tell me, I intreat you, who it is; if my friend from the moor, I must sink with confusion, to have occasioned her so much trouble."

"Nay," replied Julia, "if the sight of those so beloved is painful, I shall keep it to myself."—"Not so," returned she; "if 'tis her, let me see her; she will bring me peace, health, consolation—everything."—"If she can bring those, you shall see her," said Julia, and immediately went out to perform her promise.

Mr.

Mr. Belmont rose to go. "Do not leave me," said she; "let me have the pleasure of seeing both my preservers at the same time." She could not add more; for the door opened, and Mrs. Rivers and Bennet, Lady Melville and Julia, entered. Mr. Belmont withdrew to the window, to give the Ladies time for their first congratulations; for Louisa's surprise and pleasure took from her the power of utterance, and she could only hold out her hand to the amiable Mrs. Rivers, who, clasping her arms round her, "My dear child," said she, "how much am I rejoiced to see you:

you better ! Judge of the pleasure I must feel, by the affection I bear you ; which has occasioned me for a short time to revisit a world to which I had bidden eternally farewell !”

Mrs. Rivers's form, though elegant and beautiful, intirely escaped the notice of Mr. Belmont , who, lost in one of his usual reveries, “ had his eye fixed on vacancy.” But the voice of the Lady shook him from his inattention, and an involuntary exclamation of “ Merciful Heaven ! am I awake ?” escaped him. The suddenness of the expression

expression surprised the Ladies, who unanimously turned and fixed their eyes on the person that uttered it; but no sooner had the eyes of Mrs. Rivers met those of Mr. Belmont, than she gave a loud scream, and sunk senseless by the side of Louisa. The affectionate Bennet was scarcely less alarmed; for, though she attempted to assist her mistress, her limbs refused their office, and, had it not been for the support of Julia, she must have fallen to the ground. Mr. Belmont, though the cause of the confusion, was the first that flew to the relief of Mrs. Rivers, whose situation

convicted him, that what he thought delusion, was real waking happiness.

“ I am not mistaken,” cried he ;
 “ it is, it is, my Maria—my love,
 my wife !” As he spoke, he caught
 her in his arms, and embraced her
 with an ecstasy that recalled her
 fleeting senses : but the happiness
 was too great for her weak spirits
 to bear ; for ’twas indeed her Henry
 —her much-loved, long-lamented
 husband—and she could only arti-
 culate his name, before she relapsed
 into a state of insensibility. Lady
 Melville, though astonished at this
 scene,

scene, was the most collected, and intreated Mr. Belmont, if he valued the life of the Lady, to leave her till she had recovered her surprise.

“*If I value her life, Madam!*” said he: “what is there on earth dear without her, my long-lost, only love!” He now, at Lady Melville’s request, placed her on a sofa; though that Lady was obliged to again repeat her request of his leaving them a short time, which he now unwillingly obeyed.

The usual remedies were some time administered without effect: at length, however, the Lady gave
signs

signs of returning life. Opening her eyes, she cast them round with a solicitude that spoke the emotion of her mind; but, not finding the wished-for object, she exclaimed, "Tell me, I intreat you, what is become of my Henry!—or is it only my tortured imagination that presented him?—Yes, blest spirit, thou hoverest round me, impatient for the hour when my soul, freed from its bonds of clay, shall spring to meet its counterpart."

"Let me beseech you," said Lady Melville, "to be calm.—You have really seen our much-esteemed friend

Mr.

Mr. Belmont. “ Mr. Belmont !” repeated she : “ yet surely I saw my husband, my beloved Henry—his image is engraven on my heart, and I cannot be mistaken.”

“ You are not deceived,” said the enraptured Belmont, rushing into the room ; “ we are both awake—awake to such happiness, that I cannot think on what is past, so lost am I in the ecstasy of the present moment ! My Maria is restored from death, and all is rapture and boundless transport !”

A scene now followed, which to describe, would require all the pathos

pathos of the most able writer. They asked each other numberless questions, forgetting the answers amid the raptures with which their hearts overflowed; until the speechless tears of Louisa (that had perhaps prevented the surprise of such a meeting being fatal to her) waked them from their transports, to speak comfort to her they looked on as the cause of their present happiness.

Lord Melville was soon informed, by Mr. Belmont, of this stroke of unexpected happiness, as well as of the real state of Louisa's health, whose recovery they no longer despaired of.

“ To

“ To tell you, my good friend,” said Lord Melville, “ I rejoice at your happiness, is to say too little; perhaps I should find it hard to express myself suitably on the occasion. My heart ever owned you its friend, exclusive of the obligations I owe you on my Louisa’s account. You will now seek happiness no more in foreign climes—you have it now at home—and I shall enjoy the society of a man I esteem as a brother.”

Little more passed between the Gentlemen; for Belmont was impatient to return to his Maria; and

Lord

Lord Melville, freed from his uncertainty, longed to try his strength in getting up, that he might be soon able to visit the fair object of his affections.

Some few days after was fixed on, by Lady Melville, for the lovers meeting; but her son, whose spirits ill brooked the restraint long laid on them, determined, at all events, the next day, to see his Louisa. Accordingly, he dressed himself as well as his weak state would permit, and, by the help of his valet, reached the anti-chamber of her room. Sending for Julia, he told her

her he was determined to see Louisa, but desired she would first acquaint her with his visit, as the surprise might be of disservice to her.

Julia, laughing, re-entered the apartment, where indeed all our friends were assembled—"A visitor, a visitor, good folks!" said she; "one Doctor Melville. Have you any opinion of his skill, Louisa? He is come to offer his best service, and only waits in the next room for permission to pay his devoirs in person."

Louisa, who was sitting on the sofa for the first time since her illness,

illness, wrapped in a large morning-gown, intreated Lady Melville to make an excuse for her. "That I should be happy to see Lord Melville, I own," said she; "but indeed I cannot see him in this situation."—"Oh, a truce with your dress," returned Julia; "physicians have a privilege to see people in any déshabille; so, pray enter, Doctor." A second permission was not waited for. In a moment our lovers met. "Why have I been so cruelly deceived?" said Lord Melville; "those pallid looks import much more than I have been told."

"It

“It would have been of little use to tell you,” said Julia, “she was in extreme danger.—Only remember, Augustus,—next time you are seized with an heroic fit,—you may chance to wound more than your enemies.”

“You are a painful flatterer, Julia,” said he: “though to be of consequence to those we love, must give us delight, yet ’tis infinitely lessened when we think we have occasioned them pain.”

“Indeed, my Lord,” replied Louisa, “I have severely felt your
sickness,

sickness, as I knew myself the cause; for my own, I shall always look on it as one of the happiest passages of my life, as it occasioned the meeting of Mr. Belmont and my amiable friend."

That Gentleman now presented his adored Maria to Lord Melville; and the general happiness of this little company, made wounds and sickness give way to cheerfulness and good-humour.

"For a company of Ladies, you possess very little curiosity," said Belmont—"You see a man and wife

wife by different names, yet don't inquire the reason."

"Had I not thought the question rude," said Lady Melville, "I should have intreated to know what calamity could have parted you so many years, and what strange fatality could have made you believe each other dead."

"The story, my dear Madam," returned he, "is so very intricate, that as yet I cannot tell the motives for this cruel separation; but that it must be the work of my uncle, is past all doubt. Start not, Maria—shrink not, Louisa—when I tell
you

you Lord Danford and Mr. Rivers are one. Nothing, my love, but your absence from the world could have prevented your hearing of it; 'tis now thirteen years since he was created Earl Danford. Bear up, Louisa (seeing her pale and trembling); I am offended at your want of confidence. Do you think, because I partake of his blood, that I share his vices—or that, as his relation, I must be your foe? No, my dear girl, I will take on me the guardianship which his behaviour has forfeited; and the day which gives you to your worthy lover, a fortune waits your acceptance, which, though unequal to your merit,

merits, I would wish to be a memento of my gratitude."

"Spare me," returned Louisa: "you overwhelm me with kindness. I did not doubt your protection; but indeed I cannot hear Lord Danford's name without horror."

"I have equal reason to execrate him," said Belmont; "for nothing but his contrivance could have caused my unhappiness!—But, come, my dear Maria, tell me what has happened to you since our separation; and, in return, I will in-

form you how severely I have felt your loss."

Mrs. Rivers instantly obeyed; and, with a grace peculiar to herself, related what she had before told Louisa: therefore a repetition here would be needless.

"And now, my dear Henry," said she, as she concluded, "tell me every circumstance that has happened to you since our parting." Belmont received a bow of attention from the company, and immediately began.

"To

“ To paint our parting, my dear Maria, would be painful to remembrance, and making too free with the feelings of our worthy friends: suffice it to say, that, when the chaise I was in reached my uncle's, I was so lost in sorrow, as scarcely to bid him farewell. As for him, he bid me adieu with much seeming affection, and repeated many promises of protection to you, and the little one we expected.—‘ Two years,’ said he, ‘ will be the utmost limits of your stay—Had you not married till that time, it had been better; but, as it is, depend on my friendship to the charge you leave behind.’

With many professions of this sort, we parted; and I set out for Portsmouth, where the ship lay, with a firm reliance on his honour, and the friendship of his amiable Lady, whom I left with you. Ruffel, the servant I took with me, I had ever the highest confidence in—he, you say, brought the news of my death, as likewise my baggage—He must have been the agent of the diabolical schemes that were afterwards executed. On my arrival at Portsmouth, the Captain came to receive me with great civility, and intreated my company to dinner; after which we were to go aboard.

I then

I then, my love, wrote to you, and delivered the letter to Ruffel, with orders to put it in the post, and afterwards to take my things aboard. In the evening, the Captain and myself joined the ship; and, the wind being fair, we immediately set sail. Towards midnight, as I had not seen Ruffel, I desired the Captain's servant to send him to me. The man presently returned, and told me no servant of mine had come on board, nor any baggage. I was vexed to find my judgement so erroneous; for I really thought Ruffel the honestest fellow in the world, and was now clear he had

robbed me. (How could the heart of man plan such a scheme! for those things, 'tis plain, were stolen for testimonials of my death). The Captain supplied all my wants in the passage; for I had nothing but what I had on. In fine, we arrived safe at Bengal: you know, I spent many of my boyish days there. My old acquaintance flocked to see me. An old Gentleman (a friend of my father's) insisted on my taking up my habitation with him. My trifling fortune I recovered without trouble; and I counted the hours with impatience, till the time should arrive for my return. In the interim,

rim, a ship arrived from England. A letter was brought me—it was my uncle's hand——A trembling seized me—But how was my horror increased, when I perused the contents! As I have ever carried it in my pocket-book, you shall hear it, and judge.

“ My dear Nephew,

“ I KNOW not how to speak comfort to you, when to myself it is fruitless—or advise you to bear your sorrows like a man, when they have rendered me womanish. A fortnight since, I lost my dear and ever-valued Mrs. Rivers. Severe

as that is, I would our calamities ended there.—How can I write what followed!——Your gentle Maria could not bear the shock; but,—after bringing into the world a dead daughter,—expired, three days after her much-loved friend. Dear to each other in life, I separated them not in death, but had them placed together in our family grave. Were I less affected myself, I should attempt to speak consolation——But 'tis impossible!—The gust of sorrow must have way—and only time can reconcile us to our loss. Might I advise you—Remain some time longer in India,

or

or make the tour of Europe: it may divert a melancholy, which an immediate return to England can only augment, and which would be fruitless to those who, by the time you receive this, must have been dead almost a year.

“ Mrs. Rivers bequeathed me her estate; which, you know, was in her own power; incumbering it by bearing the name of Belmont, which you must also use. I cannot say I am fond of the change; but the fortune is too considerable to be lost for a name; and, as I have expectancy of a title, the alteration will not be material.

“ I have nothing to add, but to conjure you to bear your loss with fortitude—to take the tour I advised—and, when you have regained your tranquillity, you will be a welcome visitant to

“ C. BELMONT.”

“ The latter part of this letter I did not read till two months after I received it; for I no sooner reached the account of Maria’s death, than, as struck with lightning, I fell senseless. My generous host had me conveyed to bed, and bled; but, in spite of all his care, I was seized with a violent fever, accompanied by so strong a delirium, that, had
I not

If not been constantly watched, I had certainly put an end to my existence. In this state I remained for six weeks; at which time the fever left me, but so emaciated with grief and sickness, that for more than two months I was unable to leave my room. I was fully determined to return to England, as soon as I should regain strength to go on board of ship; but this design was rendered abortive, by my friend and host, Mr. Davis, being struck with a fever (which I sincerely believe he caught by his close attendance on me); during which he continually intreated me, by the memory

of my father, not to quit him. The adjuration was too solemn to be refused, had I not been bound to him by ties of gratitude and affection ; which was really the case. It was six months ere he completely regained his health ; and when, at the expiration of that time, I again mentioned my voyage, he dissuaded me from it by every argument in his power. ‘ Your uncle wishes you,’ said he, ‘ to regain your tranquillity before you return ; which at present is so far from being the case, that you seem to have contracted a settled gloom. Will a visit to your native land remove it ? No—I fear rather

rather increase it. Believe me, I have had losses great as yours. In the early part of my life,' continued he, 'I was in the mercantile line, blest with an amiable wife and son. When he was about fifteen, I met with some losses, so severe, that bankruptcy was the consequence. To complete my misfortunes—before my affairs were settled, I lost my boy. Those joint calamities were too much for my gentle partner to bear, and she sunk under the weight of her sorrows. Driven to despair, I went into the army, hoping some friendly sword would join me to those for whose sake I hated life; but

but the peace soon after obliged me to return to England, where I had the offer of a very lucrative place in the Indies. I immediately accepted it: nor do I ever intend to revisit my native land, till I am incapable of sorrow—Then would I wish my bones to be taken to rest with those of my wife and son. Then remain with me,' continued he—'Your misfortunes have endeared you to me—I will settle my affairs in India, and return with you to Europe—In France or Italy we shall find some agreeable habitation. Did I not know your temper, I would tell you, in return for such

a con-

a condescension, I would leave you my fortune—But I will say what will have more influence: your company will soothe my declining years, and smooth my passage to the grave.’——He ceased, and the tear rolled down his furrowed cheek, waiting my answer. Picture to yourself, Maria, a venerable old man, intreating me to supply the place of his son—Could I deny his grey hairs, or add another pang to his aged heart?—In short, I promised to stay with him until his affairs were settled in India, and himself fixed in some habitation in either France or Italy. It was near two
years

years before we could leave Bengal. At length, however, we sailed in a French East-Indiaman; and, after a tedious voyage, arrived safe at Brest. My venerable friend contrived every means he could devise, to restore my tranquillity; and, when we had recovered the fatigue of our sea voyage, purposed to set out on the intended tour. I then reminded him that I had staid in India to oblige him; and hoped he would not now attempt to dissuade me from a visit to England, as I was fully determined to pay my duty at my Maria's grave; after which, I would return, and, if he desired

desired it, never more quit him. My friend combated my inclinations no longer; and I set off, travelling night and day till I reached my uncle's seat in Nottinghamshire, where my Maria's remains were said to be laid. Mr. Davis's opinion I found truly verified: the sight of my native land, instead of decreasing my unhappiness, augmented it; and the gloomy melancholy which before possessed me was overcome by boisterous, outrageous sorrow. Lord Danford (for he had then that title) was at his seat; but, totally unmindful of him, I hastened to the church-yard—the vault

vault I well knew. Casting myself on the black marble that covered it, my actions became too frantic to be recounted, and my feelings too painful to be remembered. It was a summer morning, about the hour of three, when I arrived; and my breast still pressed the earth at seven, when the sexton came to follow his usual employ; who, shaking me by the arm, asked my business there. Thus disturbed, I immediately rose, and, concealing my agitation as much as possible, walked about two miles, where I had left my servant and horses. My spirits, by this time, were something more tranquil, and

and I rode to my uncle's. He received me with visible emotion; which I imputed to my presence reminding him of our joint loss. During a fortnight I remained there, he scarcely ever suffered me to be alone. My evening visits to the tomb, he could not prevent; but always took care (on pretence of tenderness) to send some one to disturb me. His servants, I observed, were all strangers; which he accounted for, by telling me he had lost a prodigious quantity of plate, and, as he could not fix the guilt on any in particular, had discharged the whole. Mrs. Bennet, he said,

was

was gone, with her husband, to some part of the West-Indies (he was ignorant where), to take possession of an estate, left them some time since. I had ever thought him my friend; so could have no doubt of his sincerity. Mr. Davis wrote to me while I was in England, intreating my speedy return; and my uncle pressing it likewise, I returned to France, with a heart nothing easier for the journey. My friend received me with the affection of a father; and, soon after, we set out on our intended tour, and in four years visited most parts of Europe. I then proposed to Mr. Davis, to take
a house

a house I had accidentally seen, on the borders of a wood, near a small village, in Languedoc. He immediately consented: the house was taken; two servants of each sex provided; and we lived in it till about eight months since, when I lost my ever-revered friend, rather through age than sickness. Finding his end approaching, he addressed me nearly as follows:—

‘ I had hopes, my dear Henry, before I quitted this vale of mortality, to have seen you something better reconciled to your fate; but melancholy seems to have taken such root in your breast, that time cannot efface

efface it : once more I intreat you, try to dispel it. Your fortune will now be large ; in the manner we live, it cannot be expended. Seek out the widow and the orphan ; relieve their wants ; for in soothing their sorrows, you will alleviate your own. Near eighty winters have passed over my head—yet have I known calamity. Grief, though it may imbitter our lives, seldom destroys : so cheer your spirits, my son ; and your evening of life may yet be calm and serene.’ He then told me he had bequeathed me his whole fortune, which was in the English funds ; and desired I would
 come

come over and administer to his will, and transfer the stock in my name;—convey his body to England, and place it by his family. My good friend died two days after this discourse—I felt his loss as that of an affectionate parent, and was for some time unable to obey his commands, in giving the necessary orders to have him conveyed to England. At length, however, his remains, attended by two servants, were embarked. Myself, and one servant, came by the way of Calais, to prepare every thing for this last mournful duty. We immediately crossed to Dover, where we remained
all

all night, and the next morning continued our journey on horseback. There I was happy enough to rescue Louisa. Her melancholy touched me, and I could not help imagining she resembled my Maria. You know what followed. Our farewell was at the inn, from whence I went to fetch the woman that attended her; for I could not prevail to see her any more. I continued my journey to town, a small distance from which my friend was to be interred. The body did not arrive till a month after me; at which time it was deposited as he desired.

I should

I should not omit telling you, that, on the death of Mr. Davis, my servant wrote Lord Danford an account of what had happened (myself being ill), but had not mentioned my coming to England; and, on my arrival, as I had no wish for company, I preferred a private lodging (my uncle being out of town) to his house.

“ My affairs took near a fortnight in settling; on which I found myself possessed of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I set off post for Nottinghamshire: there again my feelings, Maria, were

awaked to agony—the happiness I had once enjoyed in this spot, only made the present more drear. My uncle, I found, had been gone some time to Danford Castle, where I purposed to join him, as soon as I could quit the painful spot which (I thought) contained my Maria.

“ I wrote Lord Danford word I would be with him in a few days, and accordingly kept my word. To my surprise, I found him confined to his bed, from a wound in his arm, which he informed me he received from a robber, about three nights before, in his own park.

The

The wound, for a long time, was thought dangerous; in which situation I was unwilling to leave him: but, when near healed, I told him my intention of returning to France, as I found my spirits more agitated in England than in the quiet retreat I had so long been accustomed to. He appeared to approve of my return to the Continent; and we parted. On the road to London, I met Lady Melville, and our young friends. I intreated to know Louisa's history. The Countess obliged me; and I found, by her recital, who was the real person that had wounded Lord Danford; and deter-

mined to use my influence with him to discover her family. For that purpose I staid. Blest delay! which has given me back my long-lost love!—I shall now wander no more—every place is home and heaven!”

Mr. Belmont concluded; and our little company soon after separated for the night, promising to meet earlier the next day. Though Lady Melville had apprehended danger from Louisa's being so long disturbed, a few days convinced her, that the company of beloved friends is more efficacious than medicine.

In

In a short time, Louisa was enough recovered to leave her chamber. The lover was again importunate, and found warm advocates in Mr. Belmont and his Maria; who, however, thought it most prudent to defer the marriage till Lord Danford's return to London, which was daily expected.

Some few days after, he accordingly arrived; which Mr. Belmont was no sooner informed of, than he wrote to him.

“ My Lord,

“ You doubtless have thought me some time past in France, brooding

over the sorrows you have so ingeniously contrived for me. But the spell is broke—Your Lordship is now perfectly *known* to me. All subterfuge is vain—I must be informed what purpose it was to answer, that my dear Maria has for years been tortured—lost to her husband, and the world: likewise, who Miss Louisa Villars's parents were—and what fortune she should possess; for, though you have forfeited all right as her guardian, she has still a protector in

“ HENRY BELMONT.”

Words are inadequate to express Lord Danford's situation, on the receipt

receipt of the above. For some minutes, amazement and horror left him motionless. Shook from that, he saw his dark transactions, of many years, all at once discovered—He felt he must be shunned and execrated by all mankind—He saw no remedy but death or flight. His crimes were too great not to make him dread the first—and eternal infamy was in the latter. In this dilemma, he summoned his counsellor, Mrs. Masters, who had lived with him many years, and indeed knew all his transactions. To this Lady he disclosed his situation; who, though shocked at the

discovery (as she well knew the dangerous consequence), yet was more collected than his Lordship, and advised him to return word, He would explain all on the morrow; as by that time he might form a more probable story than was possible at this juncture.

'Tis said, the Devil first betrays to sin, and afterwards to punishment. This happened to be exactly the case with Mrs. Masters, who no sooner gave a little time to recollection, than she found this discovery must ruin Lord Danford, and most likely involve her in it.

There

There was but one way to save herself; which was, to discover all she knew to Mr. Belmont. This, her prolific brain suggested, would not only procure her pardon, but reward. The Lady then, as soon as she conveniently could, left her Lord to the pangs of despair, and hastened to Lady Melville's; where the servant that brought the letter had informed them Mr. Belmont was. She immediately inquired for him, and was shown into a parlour, and soon waited on by the Gentleman; who, recollecting her, exclaimed, " I am much deceived, Madam, if you are not the person

who attended Miss Villars from France:—have you any business with me?”—“Yes, Sir,” returned she, “but of such a nature, that I cannot disclose it without first obtaining a promise of your pardon.”

“I can’t see why my pardon can be necessary,” replied he, “but will venture to promise you Louisa’s: her’s, I suppose, will be the most material, as the injured party.”

“No, indeed,” said she; yours and that of your Lady is the most essential—and I again intreat it, before I dare inform you of what must give you both anguish and delight, and will cover me with endless confusion.”

fusion."—"Proceed then," said he, with impatience; "as far as I can promise pardon for crimes I am unacquainted with, you have mine." His manner was too peremptory to be refused; and Mrs. Masters, with some hesitation, began.

"Eighteen years, and change of name, have made so great an alteration, that you do not recollect, in me, the servant that succeeded Mrs. Bennet, to wait on your Lady, then Miss Clairville. Your uncle took particular notice of me—in short, by his promises and presents, he obtained all he wished: but I was

soon informed he had only taken
 that method to make me more ef-
 fectually his creature, in his designs
 on my mistress, without whom he
 swore he could not live. Though
 this was by no means pleasing, yet
 the presents he offered were so great,
 that I consented to assist him all in
 my power. Your servant Russel
 was in the conspiracy; and, with
 the assistance of a person of his
 procuring, they were some night
 (after the family were gone to bed)
 to force Miss Clairville into a chaise,
 and convey her to my master. This
 was the easier to be effected, as her
 room was in the left wing of the
 house,

house, where nobody slept but ourselves and Ruffel. However, this scheme was frustrated by a letter (which Ruffel wrote to George) being lost the very day before that on which our plan was to take place: at least we ever thought that the reason of your hasty elopement to Scotland.

“ Your uncle was waiting about twenty miles from home; where he intended to meet the Lady, and convey her to a place of safety. Ruffel, on her not returning in the evening, set out immediately to him with the news. It is impossible to describe

describe his distraction—He vowed to pursue you both with never-ending vengeance—to make you feel tenfold the anguish you had occasioned him—and, finally, everlastingly to separate you from your bride—which he had no doubt she was by that time. Russel returned as soon as possible, to prevent suspicion. Your uncle came home, two days after, in all appearance tolerably composed. Mrs. Rivers discharged me: but I was not much at a loss; for your uncle ordered me to go to London. On my arrival in town, I hired a lodging near his house, and took the name of Masters. The woman
with

with whom I lodged was of most infamous character; which was not lost on Mr. Rivers, even on his first visit. For my part, I thought he was tolerably reconciled to you; but about seven months after, hearing your Lady was with child, he came to my lodging in a state little short of frenzy—‘Can Henry imagine,’ said he, ‘a child of his, by Maria Clairville, shall ever inherit my fortune?—nay, more—part of it, perhaps, in my life-time!—for Mrs. Rivers has bequeathed them hers, should she die before me.’

“ I asked him, when he was rather calmer, how he knew Mrs.

Rivers’s

Rivers's fortune was left to your Lady? 'By the information of the lawyer who made the will,' said he. 'They have fooled me once—'Tis now my turn:—they shall be disappointed, and I revenged.'

"The next day, he met the attorney, at my apartments; and between them it was agreed, that he should draw a will exactly like that he had drawn for Mrs. Rivers, only substituting your uncle's name throughout instead of Maria Rivers, to whom the fortune was left on condition of bearing her maiden name of Belmont.

"The

“ The will was drawn—Mrs. Rivers’s signature copied—and Ruf-
 sel and myself made witnesses. I
 should not omit telling you, Russel
 was a constant visiter at my lodg-
 ings, and received large presents
 from your uncle for the news he
 always brought. I asked your uncle,
 of what use the will would be, as
 Mrs. Rivers might outlive him :
 ‘ If she does,’ returned he, ‘ I shall
 have no occasion for it—if not, I
 shall be safe. ’Tis true, I once
 loved Maria so well, that, had it
 been in my power, I would have
 laid my whole fortune at her feet ;
 but now (if possible) I hate her
 more

more invincibly than ever I loved her!’ He then told me he had formed a plan of sending you to India—‘Much may be done in so long a separation,’ said he. ‘Though I have no designs on her person, by some means I will everlastingly mar their peace:—’twill be most glorious revenge.’

“Much more passed to the same purport; and the voyage was soon after proposed to you. Your uncle informed me, his Lady used every argument in her power to dissuade him from letting you go—but in vain. You set out for Portsmouth, attended

attended only by Ruffel, in whom you had an intire confidence—You know he betrayed that trust. 'Twas so contrived by your uncle. He returned immediately to London with your baggage, took private lodgings, and remained concealed near two months; at the expiration of which time he appeared, apparently in deep sorrow. You were seized, he said, after being a fortnight at sea, with a violent fever, and expired in three days—that, fortunately meeting an English vessel at the Madeiras, he thought it best to return, and bring your property home.—This being told to
your

your uncle's Lady without any caution (joined, I believe, to his reproaches for her sorrow at the loss of her heir, as he termed him), threw that Lady into convulsions, that terminated her life in about five days after she heard the news. Your wife, uneasy at not hearing from Mrs. Rivers for some days, came to town. She had not yet been acquainted with this false account; nor, indeed, had your uncle determined in what manner she should be told it. On her arrival, Ruffel, by chance, opened the street-door. A scene of horror followed. For a moment she was motionless—
then,

then, in a voice scarcely articulate, asked a number of questions concerning you. For this they were not prepared, as she was totally unexpected; and Ruffel stammered out something of sickness.—‘ I know all now,’ said she, wildly, ‘ by your mourning-dress—he is dead.’ She said no more (the shock was too great), but sunk senseless on the ground.”

Mr. Belmont now interrupted the Lady's narrative, by walking up and down the room, with a countenance so distorted between sorrow and rage, that it was impossible

possible to say which was most predominant.

Mrs. Masters dropped on her knees——“ Ruffel, Sir,” said she, “ informed me of what past: perhaps he might exaggerate. For Heaven’s sake, pardon me, before I relate the rest.”——“ Proceed, woman,” replied he, “ or await the fate your crimes merit.”

“ Your uncle,” continued she, “ was in the house when this happened, and came down at the noise. I believe he was sorry to see the state of your Lady, but ordered her
to

to be immediately put into Mrs. Rivers's chair, and conveyed to my lodgings. He came first, and ordered me to keep out of sight. 'By Heaven,' said he, 'my revenge is greater than I expected!—I only meant to separate—not to kill.'—Your Lady was now brought, but quite senseless; so that I could remain in the room with great safety. A physician was sent for, who pronounced her in the greatest danger: in short, she passed the night in dreadful agonies, and in the morning was delivered of a daughter.—O! Sir, you will forgive me all I have told you, when I now inform
you,

you, that daughter was not dead, as represented—nay, more, she still lives—that in Miss Villars you see your child!—‘Merciful Heaven!’ interrupted Mr. Belmont, ‘is it possible! or do you invent this subterfuge to avoid explaining who she really is, and to divert my just revenge from the perpetrators of such infernal actions as Lord Danford and you are guilty of?’

“No—on my life, Sir,” said Mrs. Masters.—“Think on her age—Compare her person—Is she not exactly what Miss Clairville was, when you set out to Scotland?”

Mr.

Mr. Belmont was for some minutes too much affected to reply. At length, covering his face with his handkerchief, he ordered Mrs. Masters to continue.

“ Your uncle was immediately informed of what had happened. He ordered me to convey the child to my friends in the country, and pass it for my own. The landlady was also well paid for her part of the transaction; and every body was told the infant was dead. I took it away, the night after it was born, to my relations, near forty miles from town. At my return, your

uncle's Lady was dead, and Mrs. Bennet was with your wife; so I could not remain in the house, as she would have known me. Mrs. Rivers's senses, I was informed, were quite lost: and your uncle, to remove her intirely from your knowledge, gave Mr. Bennet four thousand pounds, under pretence of kindness, to settle with her in the country. About a year after, Bennet wrote word she was much better; but your uncle, who wished to see her no more, answered in a manner that had the desired effect; for they removed, but he could never learn where.

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Rivers, by this means, satisfied his revenge, and enjoyed the fortune left to your Lady. But he was never happy; he lived in continual apprehension of your finding out the deceit; and, had you come to live in England, his fears would have made him quit it. He even discharged all his old servants, that had the least knowledge of you or Mrs. Rivers; took me to live in the house with him; and fixed Ruffel as steward to a new estate he purchased in the North: but he did not enjoy his new employ long; he was killed by a fall from his horse in less than three months.

L 2

“ Your

“ Your uncle did not conceal from me the satisfaction the death of Ruffel gave him. ‘ There is the most material evidence removed,’ said he; ‘ a fellow that would ever have kept me in dread: if I can but contrive to keep Henry abroad, I have nothing to fear.’

“ Thus time passed for some years. Your daughter Louisa (for she was christened by that name) was removed at the age of five, and placed in a convent. I took her myself to France, and paid some years in advance, as I would have no questions asked;—said she
was

was an orphan, of the name of Villars, intirely dependant on the bounty of the Gentleman who had undertaken her guardianship. As they had no direction by which they might find us, we heard nothing of her for eight years; at which time I went over, and paid four years more; at the expiration of which I said I should fetch her home.

“ On my return to England, your uncle (who had for some years been Earl Danford) asked me what we were to do with her, when the time was expired.—She’s a fine

L 3 girl,

girl, my Lord, (said I); pass her to the world for a natural daughter of your own.—‘ ’Tis not a bad thought,’ returned he; but I dislike her unseen, so cannot come to a resolution of that kind yet.’

“ During all those years, you, Sir, were but once in England. I was kept out of the way the whole time, for fear you should recollect me.

“ Four years passed over, and I mentioned to Lord Danford my promise of fetching Louisa home. With some difficulty, he consented. On my arrival at Abbeville, I became

came acquainted with Mr. Danvers, but had no idea of his attachment to Louisa. He came with us to England. You know his desperate intent, when yourself rescued her. So many years had passed, that I did not recollect you when you came to Dover, but answered in the manner I did, because I knew Lord Danford would never pardon my having formed an acquaintance on the road ; and, another reason, I had hopes of hiding my own imprudence respecting Danvers. Lord Danford was at the Castle, a seat he had lately bought. We joined him there. His aversion to Louisa

was quickly changed ; 'twas not lost on me. I remonstrated—and he promised a change of conduct. One day, a letter arrived from you, which informed him you would be with him in a few days. Louisa and myself were to be sent out of the way ; and accordingly, next day, on pretence of getting things ready for her reception, he sent me—Louisa was to follow in two days—but from that hour I have not seen her.

“ You arrived three days after, and found Lord Danford stabbed in the arm, and remained with him
until

until the cure was near completed ; which, he since has informed me, would have been much sooner, but that your presence, and the recollection of the injuries he had done you, kept him in a continual fever. I by chance saw you one day, while you were at Danford Castle, and immediately recollected you for the person that had rescued Louisa ; of which I did not fail to inform your uncle. His surprise was extreme. ‘ Aye, Masters,’ said he, ‘ the hand of Heaven is against us ; for, though I deprived Henry of one fortune, by that loss he has found a larger : but we have gone too far to recede.’

L 5

Your

Your departure soon after, as he imagined, for France, a little calmed his spirits; and Louisa was sought with the greatest assiduity—but in vain. He heard not the smallest tidings of her, till this morning he received your note. I left him in a state not to be described. He is unacquainted with my coming, and utterly at a loss what answer to give you.”

Mrs. Masters ceased, and expected Mr. Belmont to speak; but that Gentleman pulled the bell, and desired a servant to tell Lord Melville he desired his company a moment.

Lord

Lord Melville immediately attended him. “My Lord,” said he, “by this woman I am informed of the parents of Miss Villars, but must have better authority; will you favour me with your company to Lord Danford’s?”——“Willingly, Sir,” returned he.——“But first,” said Mr. Belmont, “apologise to the Ladies for our absence—the fight of Maria and Louisa at this time would render me incapable of the business I am going upon.”——“Good Heaven! what business?” said Lord Melville.——“Nay, nothing that need alarm you, on my honour; only an answer from Lord

Danford. You cannot think I mean to raise my hand against the brother of my father—though he is the greatest villain that ever existed.”

Lord Melville soon made the necessary apology; and our Gentlemen, with Mrs. Masters, set out immediately for Lord Danford's.

On the way, Mr. Belmont informed the young Lord what Mrs. Masters had told him concerning Louisa. He had, however, scarce time to express his astonishment, before they found themselves at Lord Danford's door; at which a
servant

servant announced them, with several loud raps, before they could find entrance. At length, a man, with horror depicted on his features, opened the door.—“ Oh! Sir!—My Lord”——said he.—“ What of him?” said Mr. Belmont.

“ Oh! Sir—he has shot himself.”
 —“ Be merciful to him, just Heaven!” said Belmont—“ But, seek assistance; it may not be too late.”
 —“ Indeed, Sir, it is,” replied the servant: “ we heard the report of a pistol about a quarter of an hour ago—I ran up stairs directly—but
 his

his death was instantaneous. On the table was this letter ;" delivering one directed to Mr. Belmont, who immediately put it in his pocket, and again ordered assistance; which, however, proved abortive, as the ball had passed his brain.

The Gentlemen retired into a parlour, where Lord Melville desired Mr. Belmont, whose agitation had made him forget the letter, to have recourse to that. Mr. Belmont immediately opened it, and read the following lines :

“ You

“ You will not wonder at my
 perpetrating an act so very heinous
 as suicide, when you are informed
 of the crimes I have already com-
 mitted. This is only in Masters’s
 power to inform you. Let her be
 seized—She has been my agent in
 the business. It only remains with
 me to tell you, Mrs. Rivers’s for-
 tune should have been yours at her
 death—that Louisa (whom I at-
 tempted to seduce) is my niece—
 and your daughter. Were it pos-
 sible that what I have been guilty
 of, could by any means be expiated,
 the horrors I have for years expe-
 rienced might effect it—but ’tis in
 vain ;

vain; and I rush from the present ill, certain no tortures can be worse than my own conscience."

"DANFORD."

"Unhappy man!" said Mr. Belmont; "your death and life were equally dreadful.—May Heaven be more merciful than you dared hope!"

"Shocking indeed!" said Lord Melville. "But, my dear Sir, why stay in such a scene of horror? Your Lady, by this time, expects you. Haste, then, and make her and my dear Louisa happy—At
fight

fight of such a wife and daughter, you will forget Lord Danford."

"Though I long," said Mr. Belmont, "to catch Louisa to my heart, and bestow on her a parent's benediction, yet it must be done with caution; the news hastily told might be fatal. But let us return home; the sight of them will calm my spirits."

He now summoned a servant, with whom he left orders; nor did he forget Mrs. Masters, to whom he addressed himself as follows:
 "'Tis true, you deserve the severity

rity of the law ; but, in compassion,
 as you have disclosed the truth, and
 in mercy to my uncle's crimes, over
 which I would willingly cast a veil,
 you are free. I would put it in
 your power to repent—Call half-
 yearly on my agent in town ; he
 shall supply you with a sum to keep
 you above want. Don't answer"—
 (she was about to speak)—“ and
 never let me see you more.”

This business settled, our Gen-
 tlemen returned home, and joined
 the Ladies, who had some time ex-
 pected them. The perturbation of
 their minds was visible in both their
 faces.

faces. “ My dear Henry,” said Mrs. Belmont (for we must hereafter call the Lady by that name), “ what has disordered you? I judged you were gone to Lord Danford’s, and have felt inexpressible pain.—For Heaven’s sake, see him no more—Who knows what deep-laid plot his evil mind may next form !”

“ Fear not, Maria,” returned he ; “ his plots, unhappy man ! are over. Before we reached his house this morning, he had escaped my reproaches by sudden death—after making what atonement he could, by disclosing the truth respecting Louisa and yourself.”

While

While Mr. Belmont spoke, his eyes involuntarily strayed between his Lady and Louisa. He now could trace (to his thoughts), in the face of the latter, every feature of his Maria—and burnt with impatience to make them sharers of his happiness.

Mrs. Belmont received the news of Lord Danford's death in silence—but, raising her expressive eyes to Heaven, seemed to ask that mercy for him he neglected to intreat himself.

“ Tell

“ Tell me, I conjure you,” said Louisa, with a faltering voice; “ was I allied to Lord Danford ?”

“ Yes,” replied Belmont, summoning all his fortitude to answer the question; “ your father was his near relation.”

“ Good Heaven ! One more question, and I have done,” said Louisa, her voice more inarticulate than before, and deep blushes covering her face,—“ Who—who——what was my mother ?”

“ A suf-

“ A suffering angel—who will forget her sorrows, on the recovery of such a daughter !”

“ Speak out,” said Mrs. Belmont, who till this moment had been all attention—“ after the strange vicissitudes that have lately happened, why should you fear our fortitude ?”

“ Exert it, then, Maria—A blessing awaits you!—a blessing beyond your utmost hopes!——Louisa is—your daughter!——is my child!—the dear, expected one, when I went to India !”

Louisa

Louisa and her mother were speechless in each other's arms—but, pressing them alternately to his enraptured heart, tears soon made way for words——“Am I indeed—indeed—your child?” said Louisa, clasping Mr. Belmont's knees——“Tell me so again—for fear my senses should have deceived me the first time——Is it possible that this dear, honoured Lady, is my mother!”

“Yes, my loved girl,” returned he, “I repeat it,—You are my child—you are the daughter of your much-esteemed friend.”

“Oh,

“ Oh, joy!—oh, happiness!”—
 said Louisa, sinking at Mrs. Belmont’s feet—“ I have a mother—
 and such a mother!—Bless, bless
 your enraptured daughter!”

Mrs. Belmont pressed her to her
 breast in silence. Indeed, this strange
 discovery had wrought so strongly
 on all, as to render them incapable
 of interference, or giving necessary
 assistance to those most concerned;
 and sobs were only audible from
 every person in the room.

Lord Melville, after some minutes,
 recollected himself so far as

to

to leave the room, and send in Mrs. Bennet with drops; whom Mrs. Belmont no sooner saw, than, hastily rising, "See, Mary," said she, "did not you tell me Louisa resembled me?—Oh, she is my daughter!"

Bennet, as well as tears would permit, congratulated all. "Yes, faithful friend of my Maria's solitary hours," said Belmont, "you shall likewise be the companion of the happy days I hope are in store for her."

Our friendly company, after some time, grew more composed, and in-

treated Mr. Belmont to tell them in what manner those strange events had happened. He obeyed. The narrative recalled their attention, and prevented the (perhaps) too violent effects of joy.

A few days after, Lord Danford was interred; and Mr. Belmont took possession of the estate, the title being extinct, as Lord Danford died childless.

Lord Castlebrook was importunate with the lovely Julia to fix a day for his happiness—"Court Louisa," said she, laughing; "the
day

day that makes her Lady Melville,
I perhaps may be prevailed on."

"A match!" interrupted Mr. Belmont, who overheard the discourse. "What say you, Louisa? Julia consents to marry Lord Castlebrook on the day you join your fate with Lord Melville. Do not protract it—name a speedy one."—"Now I know," answered Louisa, "my hand brings no disgrace with it, I offer it unasked—make it his when you please, Sir."

Lord Melville, enraptured, imprinted numberless kisses on the

M 2 extended

extended hand. "Oh, I retract," said Julia: "you have caught me unfairly; 'twas on Louisa's own consent, without the authority of Mr. Belmont, I meant."

"No authority was used," said Louisa, blushing; "I gave it as willingly as ever it was asked."

"Well, then—if it must be—take me, Lord Castlebrook—and Heaven give you no cause to repent!"

Mutual congratulations now passed—and mirth and pleasure triumphed in every face.

That

That day month the young Lords received each his blooming bride from Mr. Belmont, who presented his daughter Louisa with a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, and the sum of ten thousand to Julia, which made her fortune equal with her new sister's.

These marriages were celebrated at Lady Melville's seat, in the country; where, after some time spent, our company took a tour to see Mr. Belmont's estates.

Nor was the cottage forgotten, but enlarged and fitted up, to receive

extended hand. "Oh, I retract," said Julia: "you have caught me unfairly; 'twas on Louisa's own consent, without the authority of Mr. Belmont, I meant."

"No authority was used," said Louisa, blushing; "I gave it as willingly as ever it was asked."

"Well, then—if it must be—take me, Lord Castlebrook—and Heaven give you no cause to repent!"

Mutual congratulations now passed—and mirth and pleasure triumphed in every face.

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That day month the young Lords received each his blooming bride from Mr. Belmont, who presented his daughter Louisa with a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, and the sum of ten thousand to Julia, which made her fortune equal with her new sister's.

These marriages were celebrated at Lady Melville's seat, in the country; where, after some time spent, our company took a tour to see Mr. Belmont's estates.

Nor was the cottage forgotten, but enlarged and fitted up, to receive

ceive our company of friends; Mrs. Belmont purposing to keep the anniversary of her meeting Louisa there.

Neither was Madame Du Saint neglected; she was informed of all that had past, by letter, with a promise of a speedy visit.

Nor must we forget Mr. Danvers, who, as soon as recovered from his wounds, set out on the tour of Europe: on his return from which, he was made happy with a very amiable Lady.

Louisa,

Louisa, now Lady Melville, by the means of Mrs. Masters, found out her old nurse, and settled a handsome annuity on her for life.

One house generally held our circle of friends, who were never so happy as when dispersing universal good around.

“ The seasons thus,
 “ As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,
 “ Still find them happy; and consenting Spring
 “ Sheds her own rosy garland on their heads:
 “ Till evening comes at last, serene and mild;
 “ When after the long vernal day of life,
 “ Enamour’d more, as more remembrance
 swells
 “ With many a proof of recollected love,
 “ Together

“Together down they sink in social sleep;

“Together freed, their gentle spirits fly

“To scenes where love and bliss immortal
reign.”



THE END.



